

Montana Journalism Review, 2002

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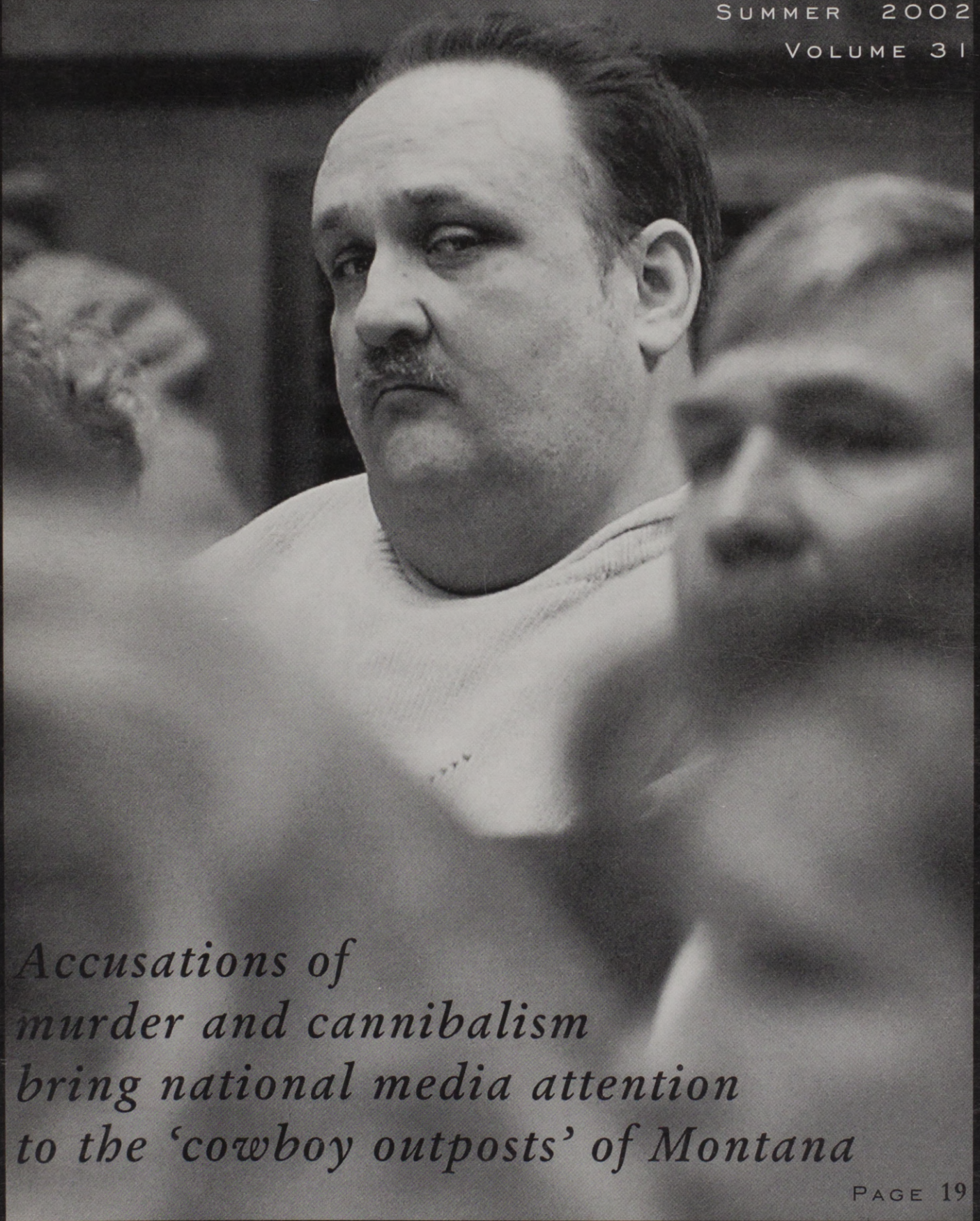


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Montana Journalism Review

SUMMER 2002

VOLUME 31



*Accusations of
murder and cannibalism
bring national media attention
to the 'cowboy outposts' of Montana*

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Montana Journalism Review

Summer 2002 Volume 31

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"This is not a writer's publicity stunt. I did not choose to put myself here."



Note from the editor

Our cover story involves the issue of "parachute journalism," of which Montana has been a recent target, thanks to the Freeman in Garfield County, the Unabomber in Lincoln, and now, the odious crimes allegedly committed by one Nathaniel Bar-Jonah. In its worst form, parachute journalism involves glib, unthinking, dishonest reporting on a sensational news story. Kim Skornogoski, ace crime reporter for the Great Falls Tribune, writes bemusedly and with a mixture of outrage and resignation at the foibles of "journalists" from afar.

It's doubtful many Afghanis would level the same criticism at Gwen Florio's sensitive, unclipped view of their world, gleaned from reporting trips for the Denver Post. In her piece, Gwen adds an extra measure of humor to her account of the reporting challenges she faced. Having won her editors' attention with her excellent reporting from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia, Gwen, aka DangerGirl, next found herself in Israel. We wish her the best in all her travels.

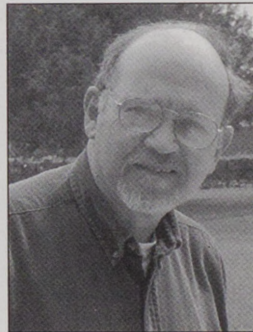
It was of course the tragic events of Sept. 11 that landed Gwen in such hot spots. 9/11's impact continues to reverberate in all our lives, as several stories in this issue attest. Coverage of religion in news media has increased, reports John Hafner. As Americans took stock of their lives after that defining moment, many made religion a more central part of their lives. Islam and its relationship to the West became a focus of concern, from benign curiosity to religious hatred. All became grist for the journalistic mill.

Even as Sept. 11 boosted coverage of religion, it buried virtually all news of "hanging chads," butterfly ballots and the ephemera of a presidential election on which our attention had once been riveted. But the story of the news consortium that looked into the ballot mess and how it dealt with 9/11 is still worth telling, as Laura Parvey discovered. Another under-covered story, reported by Courtney Lowery, was the traumatic effect that reporting on horrific events, be they New York City or Columbine High School, has on reporters and photographers. Journalists' hearts, too, need time to heal, says Courtney.

Sometimes, as newsman/poet David

Tucker describes so eloquently in his poem on page 58, news is "stationed around the horizon, ready as summer clouds to thunder." And sometimes, it pours down. Right here in Missoula, the arson of a lesbian couple's home aroused the community's wrath, but the Missoulian's reporting that the women were possible suspects brought down a hail of criticism on the newspaper, as Paul Queneau reports. In Salt Lake City, the proper metaphor would be snow, as in Olympics, covered superbly for the Missoulian by Rial Cummings and reprised by him in a behind-the-scenes look at the quadrennial spectacle.

Near Helena, the death of Montana's young House majority leader in the crash of an SUV driven by his best friend, Gov. Judy Martz' top aide, led to a storm over public access to investigative documents, as your editor relates. In San Francisco, a different death — that of the dot.com newspaper, The Industry Standard — set off its own deluge of frenzied reporters. Its editor, Jonathan Weber, who has spent the past semester here as T. Anthony Pollner Visiting Professor, writes about the undelicious irony of becoming a media target. And, as all reporters know, news can be



found in a calm, windless day, in the absence of expected developments. Sanjay Talwani describes the non-arrival of digital television in Montana, despite an FCC deadline, and how technology is way ahead of demand.

Finally, we have an excellent group of profiles, from a young Hutterite woman who explains her colony in a bi-weekly column, interviewed by Samantha Sharp, to Edward R. Murrow as mentor to long-time CBS correspondent Bob Pierpoint. Sue Ellison tells the case of Vanessa Leggett, the Houston freelancer who spent a record six months in prison for defying a subpoena. Dan D'Ambrosio profiles Jodi Rave Lee, the first Native American affairs reporter for Lee Newspapers (no relation). Annie Siess tells the naked truth about J-School graduate Aline Mosby in Hollywood. And last but not least, one-room schools in Montana are photographically portrayed in our traditional center spread by photojournalism TA Oona Palmer. *Enjoy!*

Montana Journalism Review

NUMBER 31, SUMMER 2002

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Correspondence, submissions and advertising requests should be addressed to Montana Journalism Review, School of Journalism, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, 59812, or by phone at (406) 243-4001.

Cover: Murder suspect Nathaniel Bar-Jonah captured national media attention, deepening Montana stereotypes. Photo by Derek Pruitt, Montana Standard (Butte, Mont.)

Aline Mosby: *Montana's Hollywood reporter*

Dressed or not, Aline Mosby wrote truthful accounts of movie stars from the view of a small-town Montana girl working in Hollywood

BY ANNE SUNDBERG SIESS

Would you do anything to get a story? How about getting naked ... completely naked?

As a young Hollywood columnist for the United Press wire service, Aline Mosby bared it all — with only a pencil and notebook in hand — to cover a 1953 convention of nudists outside Los Angeles.

The 1943 University of Montana School of Journalism graduate got naked to report on the story and two legendary actors — one known for the phrase, “Come on in, Pilgrim” and the other for being Playboy magazine’s first playmate — would not let her forget it.

After her story on the nudists went to print, John Wayne hung a sign over his dressing room door that read “Wayne’s Nudist Camp.” When Mosby came to talk about her new movie, Marilyn Monroe asked her if the flies bothered her.

Mosby detailed these experiences and many other Hollywood reporting adventures in an autobiographical account titled “The Perils of Aline” for Collier’s magazine in 1956. “I think I have a more truthful attitude toward Hollywood, working as a newswoman for a wire service,” Mosby wrote in a letter trying to persuade a publisher to transform her Collier’s article into a book.

“Most of the stories and books written about Hollywood have been by gossip columnists or fan magazine-y writers who have a different viewpoint — one that I, for one, think the public is tired of. My point of view is more of a journalist’s — and of a young girl from a little town in Montana working in this wacky community.”

Mosby bequested The Perils of Aline article to the UM School of Journalism upon her death in 1998.

Learning the beat

Interviewing movie stars was not what Mosby had in mind when she started at the United Press Los Angeles office in 1945. She landed the job after the regular Hollywood columnist became pregnant.

The beat was not easy to master, according to Mosby. In the beginning, she found the Hollywood mega-stars intimidating and had to tour the movie studios by bus, because she was too poor to buy a car.

She recalls an interview with actor Humphrey Bogart

(“The African Queen,” 1951) where she sat timidly halfway across the room.

“Lissen, kid,” she recalled Bogie as saying. “Actors are just like people. Look ‘em in the eye and bark back.”

Even as an experienced celebrity reporter, Mosby wondered how she survived life in Hollywood. She wrote of being tongue-tied in the presence of Clark Gable (“Gone with the Wind,” 1939) and not knowing Arlene Dahl (“Slightly Scarlet,” 1955) from Rhonda Fleming (“Gunfight at the OK Coral,” 1957). During interviews, she recalled actor John Carroll (“Hi Gaucho!,” 1936) insisting that his head be in her lap. She remembered actor Rod Steiger (“In the Heat of the Night,” 1967) murmuring, “Your eyes keep saying ‘Please!’” Mosby wrote that she was actually just sleepy.



UM School of Journalism

Aline Mosby's reporting on a nudist convention gave her national fame.



UM School of Journalism

Mosby using her interviewing skills with Ava Gardner.

In addition to putting up with the likes of Carroll and Steiger, she learned to deal with more subtle celebrity quirks. Mosby wrote that it was a challenge to understand the sophisticated silence of Marlene Dietrich ("Morocco," 1930), the meaning behind thank you notes from Joan Crawford ("Sudden Fear," 1952) and the need to talk about clothes to get information out of Jennifer Jones ("The Song of Bernadette," 1943).

Fearless nude reporting

Mosby wrote that her boss lamented that no female reporter had ever reported on a nudist camp in native attire — and she was "ordered to the front." She was not the least bit hesitant of the assignment, but she did detail the repercussions of the experience.

First, she wrote of getting sunburned in all the wrong places and then bumping into a Los Angeles Times columnist and several photographer colleagues — all in their birthday suits.

"And I had thought the rest of the press had covered the convention days before!" Mosby wrote. "We all laughed weakly, taking care to keep our eyes skyward."

High Hollywood expectations

"Many reluctant interviewees aren't particularly shy, but followers of the theory that the press invades privacy," Mosby wrote.

"These actors — often from the Actor's Studio in New York — have accepted the philosophy of 'I'll talk about my work but not my personal life.' At first this awed me. But later I decided they should stay out of show business if they don't want the public, which gives them their living, to know about them. How many actors beg us reporters to write about them when they are beginners — but when star billing arrives they shut the door in our faces!"

With her high expectations, Mosby had to suffer the wrath of angry readers. A mad actor, she wrote, is "worse than eyeing those grizzly bears in Montana." Yvonne de

Carlo ("The Ten Commandments," 1956) refused to speak to Mosby after she quoted a young police officer as saying de Carlo was too old for him.

Bette Davis ("Dangerous," 1935) extended the silent treatment by objecting to Mosby's attendance at a party. Davis claimed Mosby misquoted her in a story. Mosby wrote that this Hollywood-talk usually translates into, "I wish I hadn't said that."

The good, the sad and the ugly

Mosby wrote about the sad departures of Hollywood, as well as its accomplishments. She covered the funerals of Al Jolson, Carole Landis and Lionel Barrymore and, even though she rarely knew the deceased, wrote that it was hard not to feel sad. She added that publicists did not help the situation.

"It's always a shock to go behind those beautiful flowers at a Hollywood funeral to find the telephones, mimeographed press releases and cases of soda pop that mortuary publicists leave for the press," she wrote.

After admitting that press agents can give a reporter story leads, she noted that there is more hate than love in the press-agent-reporter relationship.

"They're on my phone trying to get me to talk to their clients all day long — nights, Sundays, when I'm in the shower or on a desperate deadline," Mosby wrote.

"They bombard us reporters with gifts, give cocktail parties, haul us off to movie previews and nightclub openings and leave us crawling, limp and with circles beneath our eyes, to the typewriter."

She wrote that most columnists would write the same stories without the mink-trimmed whisky jiggers, live pigeons, 43 personalized ceramic ashtrays and other presents they received.



UM School of Journalism

Mosby posed with Mickey Rooney after an interview.



UM School of Journalism

As a college student, Mosby was known for her pep and pizzazz.

In the beginning of the *Perils of Aline*, Mosby wrote, "Journalistically speaking the show business capital is, in my opinion, the most colorful and adventurous beat in the country."

But Mosby's Hollywood stint was only the beginning of her career. In 1959, she left Hollywood for Moscow and Beijing, becoming one of the first female foreign correspondents. In her book, *The View from No. 13 People's Street*, she contradicted her earlier opinion of the show business capital.

"Pounding out stories on Warsaw Pact meetings and dogs and men whirring around the earth is more glamorous to me than all the interviews I've had with stars like Elvis Presley and Debbie Reynolds put together," she wrote.

Stories about Cold War spies, the KGB, nuclear proliferation, Khrushchev, and censorship make a Los Angeles nudist convention look like nothing.



Anne Sundburg Siess has her undergraduate degree in computer information systems and is currently working on a master's in journalism. She hopes to pursue a career in business journalism and to one day work for CNBC.

From "The Perils of Aline," by Aline Mosby

Frank Sinatra "From Here to Eternity," 1953

"I dutifully trotted behind the irritated Sinatra and asked him the *Forbidden Question* — was he going to marry Ava Gardner? His fist stayed in his pocket but he leaped into his chrome-trimmed, fin-tailed horseless carriage and charged into us reporters, scattering us like pencil-holding chickens. I nearly had a souvenir imprint of Frankie's fender to remember that story by."

Marilyn Monroe "Some Like It Hot," 1959

"The beautiful blonde and I were sitting in the 20th Century Fox studio commissary with a publicist and chatting about Marilyn's controversial tight dresses. She wound up the discussion by showing me how she tucks a fresh flower in the plunging neckline.

"Then I put my pencil away and asked about that nude calendar the Hollywood grapevine whispered she had posed for. Marilyn, erroneously thinking she no longer was talking for print, confessed all in her wonderful breathless voice. (Later she told me that after the first horrified gulp she was glad the story finally was officially printed because 'some people thought the calendar was bad or something.')

Jimmy Dean "Rebel Without a Cause," 1955

"The late Jimmy Dean was reluctant to be interviewed from the minute he arrived in Hollywood. I was allowed on the set where he was working on 'Rebel Without a Cause' because I promised to do a serious interview.

"He stood with head bowed, occasionally peeking up at me like a wistful puppy dog who would like to be friends but doesn't know how. While I was floundering for words to warm him up, Dean fortunately spotted my MG sports car parked outside the studio. Jimmy, then at the peak of his racing career, hopped into the driver's seat and immediately became talkative. We tore around the curves of a nearby park at 70 mph, while I tried to scribble his quotes in my notebook. Unfortunately the notes were undecipherable. But later he agreed to chat — in unmovable chairs over lunch."

Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis comedians

"One Dean Martin-Jerry Lewis interview was utter chaos. They tied a rope around me, stuffed sugar cubes between my teeth and left me sitting while they had a battle with water pistols. Another trick of theirs during restaurant interviews is to make a sling-shot out of a napkin and pelt the other patrons with pats of butter."

THE JOURNALIST and the human response

*Journalists covering tragedies have little time to feel, react or grieve,
which can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

BY COURTNEY LOWERY

Journalists are supposed to be observers, listeners, common storytellers. But sometimes, the stories they tell can take a silent toll on the reporter. Sometimes objective detachment from an emotional story isn't humanly possible.

It wasn't possible for Pete Chronis when he was covering the school shootings in Littleton, Colo., for the Denver Post.

When two students walked into Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 and murdered 16 people, including themselves, Chronis' beat assignment changed. Chronis, who was then a general assignment reporter and is now an editorial writer, was sent to the homes of victims' families like his other colleagues. These are interviews he will never forget.

"It really got to people," he said. "It really kind of tore you up inside."

Reporters are programmed to take in tragedy, collect the facts, pour them into black and white and give them to the public. They are trained to not get emotional, to not break down, to hold out and do their job. Oftentimes, they are unable to let themselves react to the stories they are covering.

"While you're working on a story, you have to have a certain detachment to concentrate on your job," Chronis said.

However, the age-old image of the tough reporter has recently been under scrutiny as more professionals working in the press



Courtesy of The Denver Post

Media prepare for a press briefing from Steve Davis of the Jefferson County Sheriff Department at Clement Park in Littleton, Colo.

put the spotlight on how the news affects the news gatherers themselves.

Sept. 11 was a catalyst for media analysts, psychologists and managers of the press to encourage journalists to be aware that the emotions they feel when on assignment are natural and real and need to be dealt with.

Journalists were behind rescue workers and public servants as the busiest people in the nation Sept. 11. They were called in on their days off and worked around the clock disseminating the news. When did they get a chance to react to the attacks as humans?

"News people try to pretend they're hard-boiled," Chronis said. "We're not."

Just imagine being one of the Reuters reporters who were on the

phone with sources in the World Trade Center when the planes hit. Imagine what it felt like when the phones went dead.

Cratis Hippocrates, former head of journalism at Queensland University of Technology in Australia, studied journalists who covered a 1998 tsunami in Papua New Guinea, which killed about 3,000 people. Hippocrates said trauma is a real thing in a newsroom, but it is often ignored.

"Journalists have a history of denial. There is a perception that you are unprofessional if you can't handle it," Hippocrates said. "Journalists claim they are unaffected, but this false bravado takes its toll."

That toll can sometimes lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Ikimulisa Sockwell-Mason, a 15-year veteran reporter for the New York Post, thought she was emotionally ready for everything. She'd seen it all, she told Editor and Publisher Magazine.

"I've always been able to detach myself from a story," she said.

But when she started covering stories from Ground Zero, she knew she was wrong this time. She said the stress didn't start showing up for four days, a common time for symptoms of PTSD to flare.

Other journalists reported similar symptoms after Sept. 11 — trouble sleeping, agitation and uncontrollable weeping.

Although Sept. 11 brought many of the emotional effects of covering tragedy to the forefront, a reporter doesn't have to be covering the devastation of what is referred to as the "Big Three" (Columbine, Oklahoma City and New York City) to develop PTSD or other effects.

A study done at the University of Tulsa showed 78.7 percent of a sample of more than 3,700 journalists had covered at least one event involving death or injury on the scene, with 20 percent reporting they had watched someone being hurt or killed.

Of those surveyed, 70 percent said they experienced intense horror, disgust, fear or helplessness during their most stressful assignment.

The top three most stressful assignments were about a dead or injured child, murder and motor vehicle accidents.

By covering these events, journalists, much like the rescue workers who respond, are vulnerable to going through severe emotional stress. A study of 130 journalists in Michigan and Washington announced that the rate of PTSD in journalists is only second to the rate in firefighters.

Researchers are now looking at advice traditionally given to rescue workers to set up support and tips for journalists.

Frank Ochberg, former associate director of the National Institute of Mental Health and current chair of the executive of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at the University of Washington, describes PTSD as three reactions all at once.

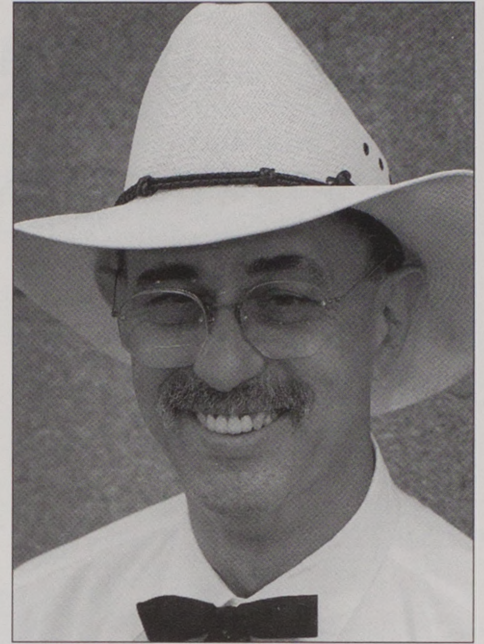
These reactions come when a person experiences an event that terrifies, horrifies or renders him helpless. The reactions include recurring, intrusive recollections, emotional numbing and fear that affect sleep, security and concentration, Ochberg said.

By definition, PTSD is the reoccurrence of these symptoms for over a month.

And journalists do not have to bear witness to a tragedy to feel the effects of PTSD or other forms of emotional trauma. In fact, many journalists, like Chronis, can be disturbed through empathy.

Oklahoman managing editor Joe Hight describes this empathy as the "Wall Effect."

"Like a tennis ball thrown against a



Courtesy of The Denver Post
Denver Post reporter Pete Chronis covered the 1999 school shootings.

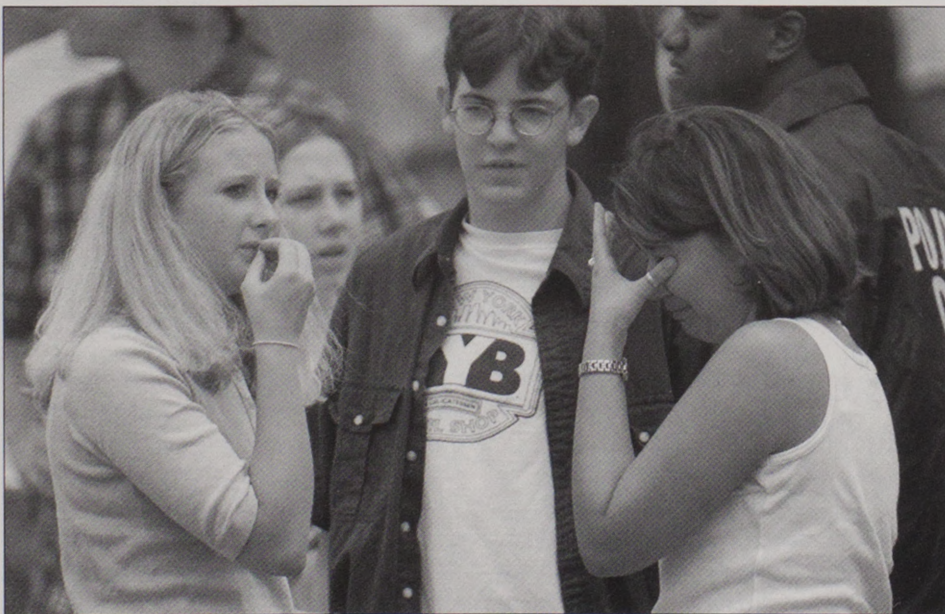
wall, the victim's emotion, all that grief, can bounce back and absorb the person facing the victims — the journalist," Hight wrote in a Web article offering tips in covering disasters.

Hight was involved in the coverage of the Edmond Post Office massacre in 1986, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 and the outbreak of tornadoes in 1999.

He recommends offering individual counseling and even group debriefings in the newsrooms as well as encouraging journalists to get out of the newsroom, take breaks and try to return to normalcy through hobbies or get-togethers after a long stint of coverage.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, heightened attention has been given in newsrooms to helping journalists deal with the stresses that accompany covering tragedy. Editors have set up counseling sessions for newsroom employees, reporters have formed support groups and as time goes by, many journalists are realizing they cannot ignore the emotions running through them just because they are members of the press.

The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma is one of the leading think tanks exploring the effects covering stressful assignments can have on journalists. The center is devoted to educating journalists on PTSD and how to deal with trauma in the newsroom. The center's most recent project is setting up a facility in New York City to help journalists deal with the trauma of the Sept. 11 attacks. The tem-



Courtesy of The Denver Post
Distraught students gather at a triage site for the mass shooting at Columbine High School.

Human Responses

The National Center for PTSD recommends the following tips for rescue workers during disasters:

- Develop a “buddy” system. Discuss emotions and provide support and encouragement for co-workers.
- Take care of yourself physically. Eat small meals and exercise regularly.
- Take frequent breaks when you feel your stamina, coordination, or tolerance for irritation diminishing.
- Defuse briefly after troubling incidents.

porary office is funded by the University of Washington’s School of Communications through a \$250,000 grant.

“If you are an observer, it doesn’t matter how hard you try to be objective — you talk to survivors, police and rescuers, this begins to take toll on your own emotional well-being. You are sharing everybody else’s pain without a chance to address your own,” Simpson told the Seattle Times.

Like many journalists, after covering the Columbine beat day-in and day-out, the reality of the stories started to take its toll on Chronis and the rest of the newsroom. Management had set up counseling services for those working the beat, but Chronis felt the need to take it a step further. He organized a wake for all of the journalists working the shooting. For many of them, he said, it was the only way to express feelings of sadness after all the suffering they had witnessed.

The New York Times had a unique challenge after the terrorist attacks, considering some of the reporters working Sept. 11 had family or friends in the World Trade Center. Staff support took on a whole new meaning for management. The

Times’ weekly newsletter swelled to 22 pages, complete with a list of missing family members of the Times’ staff.

“How easy it is for us to think of news as something that happens only to someone else. How easy to forget that we are human, and that this time, we are the victims as well as the storytellers,” the newsletter began.

Today, editors are faced with a new task. Their jobs no longer just entail assigning and overseeing news content. They are now forced to deal with the news in a different way — they must manage how their journalists are dealing with the news itself.

And the best way to do that is to allow journalists to feel and express emotions while covering tragedy. Journalists cannot slip into robot mode to achieve the highest level of objectivity, because they will either become numb from ignoring emotions or traumatized by bottling them up.

Journalists should remind themselves that they don’t have to be super-human during tragedy. Researches say journalists should attempt to get their normal amount of sleep, cut down on caffeine intake and avoid alcohol use. They also encourage humor.

And possibly the most important thing journalists should remember is to allow themselves to embrace their

sources as humans. Not only does the journalist benefit by de-numbing and dealing with those very real emotions, but society gets a more accurate picture of the news as well.

“You have to feel something for the people you are covering. That way, you don’t have an image of somebody that is not who they really are. You get the

real picture, not just some cardboard cut-out of a person,” Chronis said.

Journalists are the chroniclers of history. What is history without pictures of struggle, emotion and snapshots of the human spirit? If journalists are conditioned to cover up emotion and hold back empathy, history will be cold and sterile.

As Ochberg wrote, the recognition of these emotions, including PTSD, “enhances not only a reporter’s professionalism but also the degree of humanitarianism brought to every victim interview.”

Today, Chronis continues to remember his days covering the Columbine shootings. It is not a matter of getting over it, he said, but a matter of remembering it. With every release of new information, he re-visits his days in the living rooms of families struck by tragedy.

He still watches for coverage on the kids injured in the shootings, and follows their progress. And those who died will always affect him, as a journalist and a human.

The pain a journalist feels after covering a tragedy like Columbine continues.

“I really still feel for those families,” Chronis said. “That will never go away.”



Courtesy of The Denver Post

Four youths kneel and pray for Columbine High School victims on top of a hill to the west of the school.



Courtney Lowery, a senior in journalism, is the editor of the Montana Kaimin at the University of Montana. She will be working at the Chronicle of Higher Education in Washington D.C. for the summer and hopes to continue in magazines after graduation in December. In her rare free time, she enjoys fly-fishing, hiking and biking.

From journalist to media target

When the dot.com bubble burst, and its biggest chronicler — The Industry Standard — collapsed, the press came calling

BY JONATHAN WEBER

I don't always answer my cell phone, and as I drove down Geary Street in San Francisco one Wednesday afternoon last August, I was especially eager not to talk to anyone. But I was expecting a personal call so I picked up the phone, only to be greeted by the one person in the world I least wanted to hear from — Matt Rose of The Wall Street Journal.

I braced for what I knew was coming; Matt had heard a rumor that my magazine, The Industry Standard, was going out of business, and he wanted to know if it was true.

It was indeed true. Just the day before, after months of acrimonious efforts to agree on a new financing plan for our once-high-flying business weekly, the owners had — to my great surprise — decided to throw in the towel. The timing could not have been worse, as the entire company was on a mandatory vacation that week. In a fit of stupidity, we had decided to try to sit on the news until the following Monday so that we could tell the staff in person.

Now the game was up, and all I could do was buy time. I told Matt that I couldn't discuss the situation or comment in any way. At the same time, I tried to determine if he knew enough to run a story in the next day's paper. It was late in the day in New York, close to the Journal's deadline, and Matt indicated that he wasn't in a position to file that night. As I hung up, I prayed that no one else had the story. Then I called Alissa

Neil, our outstanding public relations director, to figure out a plan.

We knew we had only a day, at best, before the news would be out, and we desperately wanted the staff

in what was then known as the "New Economy." But as the top editor, co-founder and de facto number-two person at the company, I was also a business executive and one of the main spokesmen not only for the magazine, but for the larger entity known as Standard Media International.

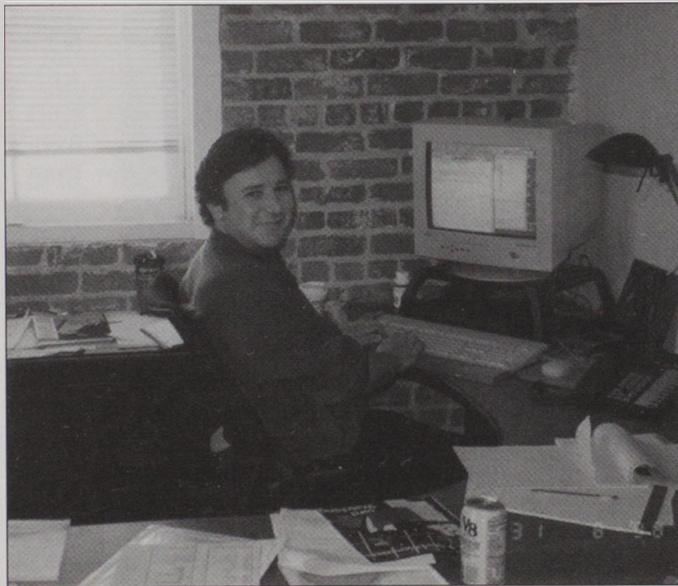
And the Standard — first because of our unprecedented success, and then because of our dramatic collapse — turned out to be a pretty big story.

The experience of being on the receiving end of journalism was at once entertaining and ego-gratifying, frustrating and sometimes infuriating. As a veteran journalist, I figured I knew all the tricks, and thus would be able to handle the press more shrewdly than most. I knew there were limits on the degree to which the coverage could really be "managed,"

but I was also very aware of the impact the media could have on our fortunes, and I was determined to make the best of it.

From the very start we were pretty good at creating buzz, thanks to the charisma of our founder and CEO John Battelle, and the fact that we were in part about the future of the media itself. Though the launch of the magazine in 1998 was greeted with a great deal of skepticism, we were happy that people were taking notice at all.

When we hit our stride in early 1999, we began to get some positive coverage, which in turn helped us do even better. Pretty soon we were anointed the hot new magazine, the media poster-kids for the Internet revolution. Cheery pro-



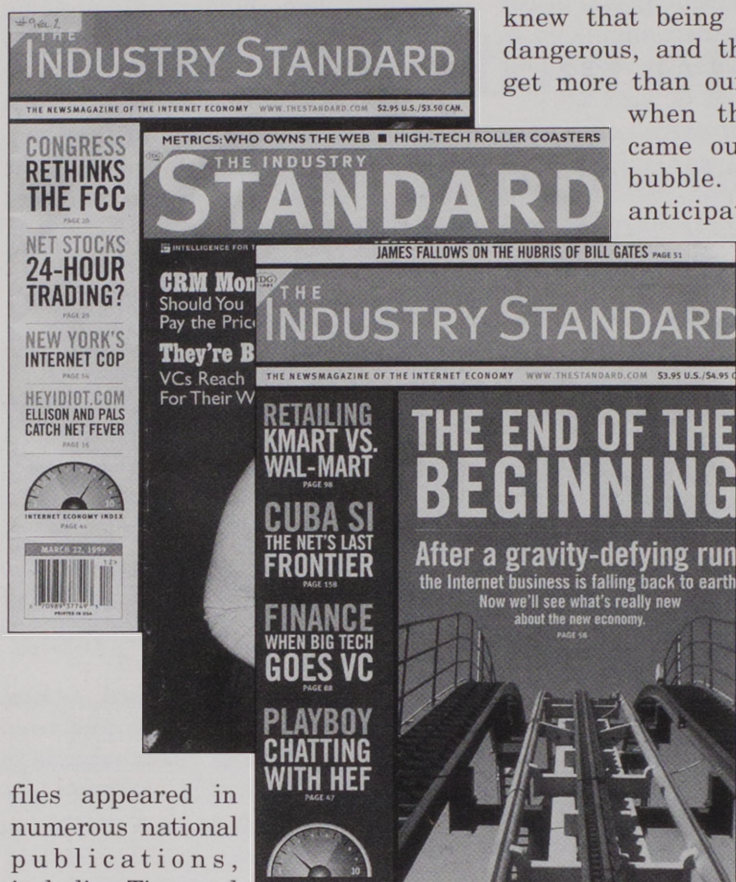
Courtesy of Jonathan Weber

Jonathan Weber, editor-in-chief of The Industry Standard from 1998 to 2001, works in his San Francisco office.

to hear it from us and not from the press. But if we started calling staffers at home right away, that would make it more likely that the news would break on the Internet that night. We decided to call as many people as we could the next morning and hope that it would hold until Matt, a good reporter, could break it on Friday in the Journal.

In the short but eventful life of The Industry Standard, I'd grown accustomed to this role-reversal. I'd been a reporter and editor my whole career, and as the editor in chief of the magazine, I was first and foremost a journalist — and we took pride in being the toughest, most skeptical, most hard-nosed journalists

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files appeared in numerous national publications, including Time and Business Week. Battelle and I were frequently quoted as authorities on the impact of technology and the Internet. We had high-profile conferences, a busy Web site, unique and popular e-mail newsletters, and a vision for how we were going to create a new kind of media company.

There were of course occasional snipes, and reporters who didn't get it, but mostly the news about The Standard was all good. And why not? We had a great story to tell, and we had the facts to back it up: soaring revenues, must-read status in the world's hottest industries, increasing success in recruiting top talent and producing top-notch stories. When the worst thing someone can write about you is that you invited too many people to your anniversary party and thus had to make some guests wait outside (lesson: don't ever make a reporter wait outside) you know you're in pretty good shape.

We were fully aware of the fact that we were becoming a symbol, a bellwether, a marker of where this whole Internet thing was going. The media needs symbols like that, and we were happy to oblige. We also

knew that being a symbol can be dangerous, and that we'd probably get more than our share of arrows when the air inevitably came out of the dot-com bubble. But just as we anticipated the Internet bust without anticipating its scale or ferocity, we anticipated the media backlash without understanding just how painful and damaging it would be.

The shift began when we had to shut down the spin-off magazine Grok in the fall of 2000, about six months after the stock market started to crumble. Grok was a good read but definitely one of our dumber business concepts, and its closing was seen as the first sign that all was not well at Standard Media International. By this time we were prominent on the radar screens of media beat reporters at the Journal, The New York Times, The New York Daily News, the New York Post, the San Francisco Chronicle, the San Jose Mercury, the wire services and all the media trades, and they began to thrill at the scent of trouble. The fact that we were so celebrated made any story about problems all that much more enticing.

The real torture began in early 2001, when falling revenues forced us to begin cutting the staff. There is really no good way to handle news of a layoff. As a private company we were under no obligation to announce them, but of course journalists are the world's biggest gossips so the news was certain to get out there. If you announce them you call attention to layoffs. If you don't, you stand accused of trying to hide something.

Another thing: the mechanics of laying people off are time-consuming. Once you decide to lay off a certain number of people you then have to decide who, exactly. Once you've decided who, you have to decide how you're going to tell them. You have to get checks cut, arrange outplacement services, train the managers involved and figure out a way to reassure the people who are not losing their jobs.

What this meant in practice was that every time we had a layoff — and because of the dramatic and unprecedented speed of the fall-off in our business, we had to do it four times — word would leak out that something was about to happen before it actually happened. Nothing will send a staff into a panic like a story on CNN saying that a bunch of people are going to be laid off a week from Thursday. I couldn't deny the story if it was true, but I wouldn't do anyone any favors by saying that "yes, indeed, something terrible is going to happen in the near future and I'll get back to you later with the details."

As a journalist, I was constitutionally in favor of leaks. But as a manager, the leaks drove me insane. I spent enormous amounts of time responding to bits and pieces of information — sometimes accurate, sometimes not — that appeared in the press. I held a staff meeting one day to talk about what was happening

with the business, and barely two hours later things I said at the meeting were quoted, verbatim, in The Wall Street Journal's online edition. I had always tried to be very open

with information, but it's one thing to be open with employees and quite another to be open to the world. Suddenly, I couldn't talk to staff anymore or send around an email for fear of seeing my words in print. The media attention forced me to be more secretive at precisely the time people most needed information.

I was personally very hurt by the leaks. We had a great group of people

As a journalist, I was constitutionally in favor of leaks. But as a manager, the leaks drove me insane.

who liked and respected each other very much, and who generally saw themselves as part of a team; I couldn't understand why someone would intentionally do things that would be damaging to the organization. The leaks could be damaging indeed: the media business is very perception-driven, and advertisers don't want to be associated with a publication that is perceived to be failing.

Everytime a negative story appeared — and as the spring wore on the stories were not only speculating about layoffs, but raising questions about a possible sale of the company and generally questioning our financial viability — the sales team would be forced into a frantic round of damage control. Largely because of the Internet and sites like Jim Romenesko's Media News, any story published anywhere was immediately seen by everyone.

I thought hard about who might be the source of the leaks, partly because I was getting a lot of heat from managers in other departments who were convinced — probably correctly — that the leaks were coming from the editorial staff. I had a few hunches, but how to find out for sure? Should we start reading email, or going through phone logs? We never seriously considered any of this, but I could now see how well-intentioned managers might, in the heat of the moment, be drawn to unsavory actions.

As the business continued to deteriorate through the spring of 2001 — we had to shut down the European edition, and our once-phonebook-sized U.S. magazine was beginning to look more like a pamphlet — the press really started to dig in. We were no longer a symbol of the the promise of the new economy. We became a symbol of the disastrous collapse not just of the dot-coms, but of much of the technology and telecommunications industries. Now no piece of bad news seemed too small. I was fielding calls from major newspapers about rumors that two people had been fired in the information and technology department. Could this possibly be news?

On the whole, of course, the bad press was on the mark; the company

was in fact in deep trouble. But as the feeding frenzy gained momentum, stuff that was patently ridiculous began to appear. One day there was a report in a publication called *The Daily Deal* that we were discussing a merger with a rival publication. This was totally untrue, and the reporter hadn't even bothered to call anyone at *The Standard*. Still, I had to spend

especially came home to me one day when *The New York Times* paraphrased me as saying that "The Standard was in crisis, but not dead yet." I had said nothing of the kind. In fact, I hadn't even spoken to the reporter, only sent a short e-mail, and thus I even had proof that I'd said nothing of the kind. The comment was in about the 15th graph of a rel-



Courtesy of Jonathan Weber

Jonathan Weber, right, chats with John Battelle, CEO of Standard Media International, at The Industry Standard's launch party in April 1998.

the better part of two days assuring the staff and the media horde that there was nothing to it. One reporter demanded to know: "Well, if there's nothing to it, why is it on the front page of *The Daily Deal*?" Other publications did full-blown analyses of the non-event, with the excuse that even if it wasn't true it could be interesting to consider what such a thing might mean.

While I had friendly relationships with many of the reporters who covered us, a certain amount of gratuitous hostility began to emerge as well. When I insisted to one reporter that we had no plans for layoffs beyond the ones we had already announced, she snarled: "Can you guarantee me that there aren't going to be any additional layoffs?" I told her to go ask her own boss for such a guarantee.

The power of Romenesko's site

actively minor story that was mostly about a golf magazine, and it would have passed largely unnoticed were it not for the Romenesko headline: "Industry Standard chief says magazine is in crisis," or something close to that.

This incident also provided a rude reminder of how people tend to get treated when they are wronged by the press. Our majority owner was very upset by my alleged comment in the *Times*, so I decided I needed to seek a formal correction. Since the e-mail spoke for itself — and since I knew the relevant *New York Times* editor personally — I assumed this would be no problem. Wrong. He said the reporter had said that I had said something like that in previous conversations and thus they weren't going to do anything. When I protested that I hadn't spoken to this reporter in at least a month, he said

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he would look into it again, and came back with the same answer. If this was how The Times treated me, a peer, I shuddered to think how they would react to a powerless stranger.

Even if no one had written a word about us, these would have been very difficult times for me and everyone else at The Standard. But the public attention to our woes certainly made matters worse, both for me personally and for the business. I tried to be philosophical about it — I certainly understood what was going on and why, and it really wasn't the media's fault that our business was in trouble. But when the press screwed up, or spun something in a way that I didn't think was fair, it still made me furious. This was *schadenfreude*, big-time. We had the gall to challenge the established media, poach reporters and editors, pay big salaries and swagger around like we were smarter than everyone else. Now we were going to be punished.

I knew the news of our bankruptcy would be a big story, but the amount of attention it received still came as a shock. Less than 24 hours after my conversation with Matt Rose, the trade publication Advertising Age reported on its Web site that there were rumors we were going to be shut down. Around the same time the Journal, unable to hold its exclusive for the print edition, published its story online. Within minutes my phone was ringing off the hook. Soon there were reporters and TV crews congregating outside the office.

There were a lot of sensitive issues around some basic questions. How could we have gone from smash success to bankruptcy in less than a year? Who was to blame? I wasn't entirely sure how I would respond; it's noble to take responsibility, and yet there were many people — most of them out of the spotlight — who were at fault. Fortunately, for that day at least, most reporters weren't

going too deep on this. We were a symbol of the Internet bust, and thus our failure was a result — and an indicator — of just how complete a bust it was. If you ever wondered whether this new economy thing was all hype, well, what more evidence do you need? The voice of the new economy itself was heading for Chapter 11!

The stories were a mixed bag, inevitably, but most of the major publications got most of it right (Matt Rose's story was probably the best). I could take some solace from the fact that many of the pieces talked about how we were known for our high-quality journalism and thus it was doubly shocking that we were going down. A

couple of days later the Times ran an editorial, which captured our rise and fall extraordinarily well, and even complimented me by name. The truth is that we probably got more attention in death than we deserved — partly because it was a slow summer news day, but because we were such a convenient symbol. But it still made us feel better.

It wasn't all over yet, though. Some stories were going to dig deeper, and assign blame. The fact was that we had made many mistakes as managers, but the owners of the company had screwed up even worse and driven us out of business when it wasn't really necessary. A furious round of public finger-pointing broke out, and the emotions of the moment made it hard to keep a level head. By late August there were three major pieces in the works — one by The Washington Post, one by the Journal, and one by the media Web site Inside.com — and I was determined

that Battelle and I were not going to be made the scapegoats.

I did feel that a lot of what was written at the end was shallow and simplistic, reliant on easy symbolism — free-wheeling dot-com kids get their comeuppance — rather than sophisticated, in-depth reporting. The Washington Post piece — written by a reporter who not only had never read The Standard but had never even heard of it before the bankruptcy — was the classic of this breed: clueless

about the business issues, riddled with mistakes, and yet ready to make all kinds of judgments. The Inside.com piece (also published in the trade magazine Folio) was probably the best of the post-mortems — good enough that when it beat the Journal

We were a symbol of the Internet bust, and thus our failure was a result — and an indicator — of just how complete a bust it was. If you ever wondered whether this new economy thing was all hype, well, what more evidence do you need?

to the punch, the Journal story was killed.

Through all of this I always tried to remind myself not to be thin-skinned, to take the good with the bad, to remember that reporters were doing their jobs and that some were going to be better than others.

I didn't live up to this as well as I'd have hoped. I know perfectly well that subjects of stories always think that what's written about them is shallow and simplistic. It's sometimes the job of the media to simplify, and even to create symbolic representations of larger issues. In many ways the Standard got a great ride from the press, and I know I got mad about things that were published far more often than I should have. But it was certainly instructive to be on the other side of the fence, to feel the impact of the way the press goes about its business. If nothing else it will, I hope, make me a better journalist.



As editor-in-chief of The Industry Standard, Jonathan Weber was at the center of the Internet boom and the ensuing bust. Weber has won numerous awards and has been recognized as one of the most influential business journalists in the country by several publications. He was the first T. Anthony Pollner Visiting Professor at The University of Montana during spring semester 2002.

Hashing out the right to know

When a prominent Montanan politician was killed in a car accident, some news media sued for and won access to investigation files — but that doesn't settle the on-going battle for the Right to Know

BY CLEM WORK

The violent death of a prominent politician is front-page news wherever it happens, but rumors that swirl in the wake of tragedy are just as predictable.

Such was the case when Montana House Majority Leader Paul Sliter, R-Somers, died in a single-car rollover on a mountain road near Helena last August 15. At 32, he was already a veteran of four legislative terms. The driver turned out to be his best friend, 27-year-old Shane Hedges, Gov. Judy Martz' chief policy advisor, whom she regarded as "my son." Both men were drunk.

The political *wunderkinder* had been on their way back down to the capital city from a GOP energy strategy meeting at a favorite mountain watering hole in nearby Marysville, an old mining town. Hedges lost control of his SUV. Sliter, who was not wearing a seatbelt, was thrown from the vehicle and killed when it rolled over him.

Although reporters were able to obtain basic information about the fatal crash in the days following, there was clearly more to the story. Hedges was unable or unwilling to recall the details, including whether he had been driving. Rumors bounced around — of cocaine use, of a drag race down the dirt road, of the governor tampering with evidence.

In the months that followed, the accident would shake the Martz administration to its foundation. But the accident would also trigger a classic joust between journalists and public officials over the public's right to know, involving choices of strategy as crucial in their own way as the policy choices pondered at the Marysville

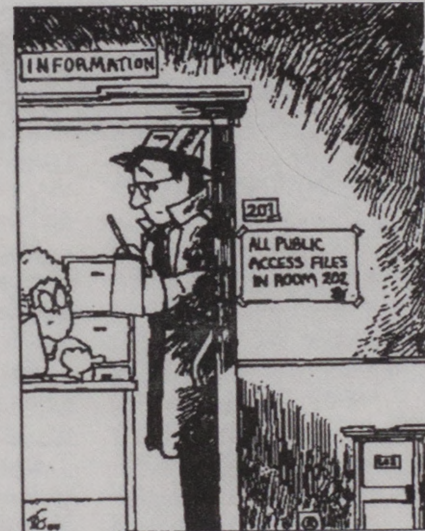
steakhouse that fateful night.

Even after Hedges was determined to be the driver, a week after the crash, and convicted on Oct. 10 of negligent homicide after a guilty plea, Lewis and Clark County Attorney Leo Gallagher was unusually tight-lipped about the crash investigation. "Every call we made was referred to Gallagher," recalled Kathleen McLaughlin, Lee State Bureau reporter. And Gallagher, citing a request by Sliter's widow Elaine to keep the records confidential, wasn't talking, even after he closed the investigation on Dec. 5.

For reporters, the need to examine the crash investigation files seemed obvious. "Given the public interest and the concerns about this tragic event, which has been fraught with rumors and hearsay, the record should be set straight," Dave Shors, editor of the Helena Independent-Record, told McLaughlin. "The conduct of the public officials involved in the events of that evening and the days that followed is a proper matter for public scrutiny."

For Elaine Sliter, who was soon appointed to fill Paul's House seat, the need to maintain some confidentiality

Access in Montana Frequently Asked Questions: A guide for journalists and citizens



Courtesy of UM School of Journalism

The Montana Journalism Review and the Freedom of Information Hotline offer the guide "Access in Montana" to better educate journalists and citizens about public access to state and local government.

seemed equally obvious. As her lawyer explained, she didn't want to have her baby daughter someday read the horrible details of her father's death. The news media, however, had specifically omitted from their request any autopsy or accident-scene photos.

To resolve the issue of access, Gallagher invited the news media to sue him for the information. Under the state's Criminal Justice Information Act, a district court could order the crash investigation files released by finding that "the demands of individual privacy do not clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure."

And sue him they did — 11 daily

Right to Know

and weekly newspapers in the state, led by the Independent-Record, as well as The Associated Press, the Montana Newspaper Association and the Montana Television Network, with stations in Butte, Missoula, Billings and Great Falls. The public and press, they argued, have a constitutional right to examine case files involving the conduct of public officials, particularly where the investigation is complete and there are no further charges pending.

There was one notable absence among Montana's major news media. The Great Falls Tribune had chosen not to join in the suit because its editors and the newspaper's lawyer wanted to make a bigger point: Not only that the press and public have a constitutional right to such documents, but that the statutory scheme that forces the public and press to sue for access to information is unconstitutional. But in order to make that bigger point, they knew the case would have to be heard and decided by the state Supreme Court, a process that might take as long as two years.

"We have a very strong constitution, and this case would have been a slam dunk," said Jim Strauss, editor of the Tribune.

He has a case. Under Article II, Section 9 of the 1972 Constitution, called the Right to Know, "No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions, except in cases where the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure."

Recent state high court opinions have made it pretty clear that when a state government official or employee



"We have a very strong constitution, and this case would have been a slam dunk."

Jim Strauss
editor, Great Falls Tribune

(and) therefore this conduct is a proper matter for public scrutiny," Justice Nelson wrote for a unanimous court.

The problem, however, is that the laws controlling the release of criminal justice information are weighted heavily in favor of privacy and against access. "This blanket presumption against access ought to be challenged as unconstitutional," says the Tribune's lawyer, Mike Meloy of Helena, himself a former House Majority Leader. To gain access, the public or the press have to go to court to secure a right they already have. By relieving the agency holding the information of any obligation to balance documents' public value against whatever privacy interests there are in keeping them secret, adds Meloy, many documents are unnecessarily kept secret because it's expensive and intimidating to file a lawsuit to uncover them.

Faced with joining the lawsuit, which meant buying into the go-to-court-for-every-document scheme written into state law, the Tribune decided to sit this one out. "We thought about filing another suit, but that would have just muddied the waters," Strauss recalled. "So we stayed on the sidelines." For Helena lawyer Jim Reynolds, representing the news media in the suit, the Hedges case may not have promised the nirvana of con-

stitutional clarity but it presented some pretty juicy issues nonetheless: Do survivors have a right of privacy (of information about the deceased)? Are autopsy documents public or not? Litigating the case, with the almost inevitable appeal to the state supreme court, could have provided answers — hopefully favorable — to such questions.

But this politically charged case was not fated to be the vehicle for answering such questions. The lawsuit was quickly turning into a three-way wrangle between the media, County Attorney Gallagher and lawyers for Elaine Sliter. Gallagher wanted to withhold names of witnesses at the accident scene who were not public employees, to protect their privacy. Sliter and her lawyer Mark Taylor wanted to keep out all descriptions of her husband's fatal injuries. All the more reason for the Tribune not to step out on the dance floor. "We had no reason to negotiate with government officials, and by negotiating, we would set a precedent for further negotiations," explained Strauss.

That wasn't the way the news media in the lawsuit saw it. "I didn't necessarily disagree (with the constitutional challenge)," said Chuck Johnson, chief of the Lee State Bureau. "But we wanted to get the records as soon as possible. It was important for the public to know how public officials (at the crash site) responded." Negotiation would serve a practical purpose of getting the information to the public while it was news.

Gallagher suggested to District Judge Thomas Honzel that he cancel a hearing and sort out the competing interests himself. Instead, Honzel turned the job of editing the 400-page investigative file back to Gallagher and the other lawyers. With Gallagher wielding a yellow highlighter and Taylor a green one — to indicate words or passages they wanted to edit out — and the media lawyers, Reynolds and partner Kim Wilson, trying to reduce the green and yellow text as much as possible, the negotiations went on for nearly a month. In the end, Johnson said, "We got 99 percent of what we wanted."

On Feb. 13, 2002, the redacted investigative file was released to the print. It was not a pretty picture. Investigators

clearly were focused on suspicions that some of Hedges' and Sliter's drinking companions, top state officials and GOP consultants advising Gov. Martz may have lied to witnesses at the accident scene, denying that they even knew Sliter and trying to hide the fact that Hedges was involved by saying Sliter was driving solo. Some witnesses also claimed Hedges himself had said he wasn't driving. Rumors of racing and drug use were put to rest.

The files did confirm, however, that Gov. Martz had later that morning "out of motherly concern" taken Hedges from St. Peter's Hospital to the Governor's Mansion before Hedges could be questioned, despite orders from the Highway Patrol to the contrary. Realizing

that the files would soon be released, Martz had already admitted several weeks earlier to the astounding fact that she had laundered Hedges' blood-stained clothes (but the question lingers whether she would have confessed, at least so soon, if the news media had mounted a drawn-out constitutional challenge instead).

The revelations were front-page news, but they weren't enough for Gallagher. He decided not to file any criminal charges, saying there was insufficient solid evidence of wrongdoing. The men whom the witnesses indicated — Leo Giacometto, a former U.S. Marshal for Montana and a Martz cabinet-level official at the time, and two of Martz's national political consult-

ants, Jim Innocenzi and John Maddox — had denied any improper actions.

Editorial reaction was predictably strong. "Wednesday's revelations call into question the integrity of (the) governor and some of her top aides," said the Billings Gazette. "In the court of public opinion, these eyewitness

charges of cover-up diminish public confidence in government." Said the *Missoulian*: "However you interpret the evidence ... it contains few examples of admirable behavior on the part of any of the principals. You get a clear sense that the trauma and profound tragedy were not quite enough to make some of them forget altogether the political implications." And for the *Helena Independent-Record*, the proof was in the pudding: "We just

wanted to set the record straight ... It was obvious that the merits of public disclosure held sway. The public deserves — indeed, must have — the information necessary to sift fact from fancy, to finally put rumors to rest."

The release of the fatal crash file did nothing, however, to help resolve any future access case, except to reinforce the access track record that Montana's news media have established in recent years — and to reinforce the notion that they will have to go to court again and again for access to public documents or meetings.

At the 1972 Constitutional Convention, UM journalism professor Bob McGiffert spoke out against the Right to Know provision as drafted,

because of the individual privacy loophole. He predicted that the privacy provision "could result in an endless series of costly and indecisive lawsuits." He was outvoted, but "McGiffert was right," said Montana Standard editor Gerry O'Brien. As of late spring, the Standard as well as other Montana news media, including the Tribune, were variously involved in litigation in three other access cases:

- In January, a district judge ruled that the Standard should be allowed to view a videotape of a DUI arrest of Beaverhead County commissioner Donna Sevalstad in February, 2001. She has appealed the ruling, arguing that she wasn't on county business at the time, and therefore the drunk driving arrest is not the public's business.
- The Standard is also suing Butte School District No. 1 for release of public records concerning insurance coverage of two Lexus cars owned successively by Superintendent Kate Stetzner. While the district refused to release most documents, it did release insurance rolls listing two Lexuses in the same time frame as Stetzner's ownership and the state attorney general's office said misdemeanor false police report charges would be filed against Stetzner.
- The Tribune is the lead plaintiff in a news media consortium that has challenged the Public Service Company's decision to withhold details of electrical power supply deals made by NorthWestern Energy, the successor to Montana Power. Judge Honzel ordered in April that some details be made public but the news media are appealing the withheld information to the state supreme court.

In Montana, maintaining the public's right to know will continue to depend on a vigilant press, willing to challenge secrecy in government. But for the foreseeable future, access litigation seems as sure as death and taxes.



"It was important for the public to know how public officials (at the crash site) responded."

**Chuck Johnson
chief, Lee State Bureau**



Clem Work teaches media law at the UM School of Journalism and is a member of the board of the FOI Hotline. He was deputy director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in the early '80s.

YOUNG COLUMNIST

on the

COLONY

Despite criticism from the colony, a 19-year-old Hutterite attempts to dissolve myths about her culture through a bi-monthly column

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SAMANTHA SHARP

Lisa Stahl is no ordinary columnist. Not only is 19 quite a young age to have 12 inches all to yourself every other Sunday in the Great Falls Tribune, but Stahl is a Hutterite.

Stahl's column, "On the Colony," offers an inside look into the life and culture of the roughly 54 members of the Gilford Colony, which is located on Montana's Hi-line. Because Hutterite colonies are located in rural areas, many people don't understand their way of life. By writing her column, Stahl helps readers grasp a better understanding of the secluded Hutterite culture.

"Lisa opens the door to our readers to a part of Montana's social fabric and culture that people don't have the opportunity to learn about," said Karen Ivanova, the regional editor of the Great Falls Tribune. "Her column has amazing reach. A lot of people clip her column and send it to family members all over the United States. She has her own special voice that really comes through in her writing. There's a wholesomeness that appeals to people."

Hutterites are a relic of the Protestant Reformation. Their roots reach back to the days of Martin Luther. Luther whose 95 Theses denounced activities of the Catholic church in 1517. Conscientious objectors to war and practitioners of common ownership of all property, Hutterites have retained the dress (all clothes are homemade), customs (soap is made on the colony) and the simple manner of living of their early ancestors.

Most colonies are located in the northern part of the United States and in southern Canada, where they moved to avoid persecution during World War I and the draft during World War II. The Hutterites have weathered long periods of persecution, moving from Moravia, Slovakia, Transylvania and Russia to settle in the United States around 1870.

Hutterites speak High and Low German as well as English. Despite having been born in America, Lisa speaks with a thick German accent. The Gilford Colony, where Stahl lives, is 45 miles west of Havre. It's reached by turning off desolate U.S. Highway 2 at Gildford and, after the pavement runs out and the road turns to gravel, driving 10 more miles.



Lisa Stahl poses in her bedroom, sitting on a quilt that she made herself.

There are two different kind of Hutterite colonies in Montana — the Dariusleut and the Lehrerleuts. Stahl's colony is a Dariusleut colony, which means they are more liberal about things like microwaves and refrigerators than the Lehrerleuts, who are much stricter about the use of technology. Dariusleut women can be recognized by the small polka dots on the women's headscarves and Lehrerleut women can be recognized by larger polka dots on their headscarves.

Stahl is the middle child of seven, with three older brothers and three younger sisters. She writes about her family often, especially about her sisters. She was originally the publisher of the colony's own school newspaper at age 15. Her public newspaper career began four years ago when she took a tour of the Havre Daily News newsroom. A woman at the paper knew that a Hutterite girl had written a short story that summer for the county fair about a Hutterite wedding.

"Out of curiosity, I suppose, she asked if I might be that girl," Stahl said. "She asked if I might like to be a stringer reporter."

But before she began the column, she asked permission from her grandpa, one of the ministers at the colony.

"I kind of stuttered a little bit (when she first mentioned the idea of a column)," said Rev. Paul Stahl Jr., Stahl's grandfather. "I told her to go ahead and see how things would turn out. If there was a mixed feeling in the colony she'd have to quit, but the majority of the colony was behind her."

Despite her grandfather's approval, the whole idea was a little nerve racking.

"I was very nervous about beginning the column," Stahl said. "It's never been heard of. Accepting new things in a colony is kind of hard. I get teased."

Stahl's column first appeared in the Havre Daily News, where her columns were published for about two years. She began writing for the Great Falls Tribune in January 2000 to gain a wider readership.

"I think the people of Havre took it harder than the paper," Stahl said. "People just started subscribing to the Great Falls Tribune. I got a letter from a lady saying she was upset that I had moved to the Great Falls Tribune because she had just bought a subscription to the Havre Daily News."

After almost two years of writing for the Tribune, Stahl quit writing the column because of the negative comments she was receiving from the colony and from other Hutterites. Some people on the colony implied that maybe Stahl thought she was better than the other girls because of her writing.

"Some people don't understand it, I guess," she said. "Some people on the colony think I'm over-informing the public. I just try to ignore them. There's always a bad side to a good side."

Despite the negative feedback from some of the colony, Stahl was overwhelmed with positive mail asking her to continue her column.

"I received mail from all over the United States, from people who were upset with my decision," Stahl said. "They suggested finding another person to write the column, perhaps one of my sisters."

Ultimately, after retiring at age 19, Stahl started her column again in October of 2001.

"I love it," Stahl said of writing the column. "I really, really like it. It's a responsibility in a way. I like to write but too many people don't understand our culture (also). I'm trying to open a window instead of relying on rumor."

Since there are so many public misconceptions about the Hutterites, column topics are easy to come by. Topics vary from mundane tasks — gardening, cooking and seeding equipment — to celebrations — Christmas, weddings and baptisms. She often takes a personal stake in her column and even wrote about her niece's death once. Many of her columns focus on the daily events of the children of the colony and the lessons they learn.

"I never run out of ideas for the column," Stahl said. "I have six ideas for columns right now. I keep it all up in my head. When I'm writing about history, I ask my grandpa who is the minister. He's really good about dates. When I have question about seeding I'll talk to my brother Brian, and when I want to know about the cows I'll talk to my other brother Ernie."

Stahl also gets suggestions of column ideas from Ivanova that people outside of the Hutterite culture might want to know more about.

"I try to give her a little guidance and raise some questions," said Ivanova. "Right now I'm trying to get her to write an article about clothing. Other editors and writers will come in and raise column ideas of things they'd like to know about."

Yet there are some things Stahl won't write about.

"Some people will ask me questions I would never write a column about, such as (about) marriage because it is a private matter. I have to keep the reader wondering."

When readers ask questions about such matters, Stahl says she responds personally.

She receives quite a bit of mail from readers, telling her how much they enjoy the column and asking her questions about her life on the colony.

"When I get letters it really encourages me to keep up my column, probably more than readers know," she said. "A lot of people write to thank me for the service I provide to the community."



This sign, welcoming you to the colony, is reached after driving 10 miles on a gravel road on Montana's Hi-line.



Lisa and her sister Gloria put on their church jackets before they go to the chapel, which they visit twice a day.

Colony Columnist

Stahl plans to continue the column for another year or so, after which she will move on to a new part of her life.

"I know I'll miss it," Stahl said. "I missed it when I quit the first time."

Despite the original distrust of "On the Colony," fellow Hutterites are coming around and seeing Stahl's column as a benefit to the colony.

"One man of the Riverview colony said I was doing a really good job," Stahl said. "He said, 'It was about time someone set the public straight and explained to them how our culture operates.'"

"People change their minds," said Stahl. "They think what I'm doing is really good. It's an educational tool for Montana."

On the Colony

By Lisa Marie Stahl

The clock on our kitchen wall reads 6:50 a.m. For the second time, I walk into the room my three sisters share to wake them. Several minutes later, standing in line in the bathroom waiting to do their hair, my sister Gloria, 10, asks me, "Why didn't you wake us? We're gonna be late for breakfast."

"I did," I answer. "You just kept pushing my snooze button, just like you do your alarm's."

So starts a typical Hutterite child's day, as the lights come on in homes throughout the colony.

Minutes later, the girls grab their jackets and hurry out the door just as breakfast is announced over the pager. They sprint off for a day that's mixed with lessons in our traditional High German language, along with English lessons — bringing them into contact with the world beyond the boundaries of a Hutterite colony.

They share a hearty breakfast of bacon, eggs and toast with the rest of the children on the colony. Eating in a dining room separate from the adults, the children are under close supervision by the German school teacher and his wife. They sit according to their age, with boys separate from the girls, just as the adults sit in a separate dining room. When they finish their meal, they go about washing their breakfast dishes and setting the table for the lunch meal. By 7:30, they're heading across the yard to the communal

church, where they'll attend 45 minutes of German school.

During their German classes, the students are being taught to read, write and understand High German, since it is not spoken fluently in our homes.

This morning, after singing a German song together and saying their morning prayers, they recite several rhyming verses the German schoolteacher assigned them to learn the night before. The students attend German school from the time they are 5 to 15. German school lets out at 8:15 a.m., giving the students 15 minutes to prepare for English school, taught in another building.

During this past summer, my colony remodeled the English school. The men made several convenient changes so there would be more room and the building would be more organized. They added a handicapped-accessible bathroom, a computer center and conference room. They also divided the main classroom into sectional areas so the teacher could have three distinct areas in the classroom.

The students' day starts up like any other public classroom, and their curriculum follows state standards. They are taught the usual class subjects such as math, reading, spelling, science, geography, health, etc.

They sit according to their grade levels, with fifth grade to high school on one end, first to fourth in the middle and kindergarten at the end. Our school consists of 13 students and is taught by one teacher.

The students do a lot of textbook work.

Our teacher has many exciting projects planned for the students this school year. One, which is way at the top of the students' interest list, is getting an ant farm. She's also working on teaching them word-processing, spreadsheets and to use databases. Another exciting project is writing and publishing a book with the students. Each chapter in the book will include one story written by each student on colony life.

The students' classes end at 3:30 p.m. They go home for an after-school snack before attending another German school class from 4 to 5 p.m. At 5:30 p.m., all the families attend a 20-minute prayer meeting at the communal church, with supper following at 6 p.m.

After supper, the kids join together for a game of hide and seek or tag — IF they don't have any chores to do at home. The chores for the children on the colony are chosen for them according to their gender.

Girls will help out at home, doing dishes, baby-sitting and general housecleaning. Boys will work with their fathers at the barn or mechanic shop. Some of the younger boys will help with the milking and feeding the other animals.

Around 7:30 p.m., as it starts getting dark, the children slowly venture home to do their German homework and spend some time with their families.

My sisters share their day with us, telling us about what happened at school, the good grade they got in reading or math, and how an older sibling squealed their hiding place while playing hide and seek that evening.

Courtesy of the Great Falls Tribune, Page 7M, October 14, 2001



Samantha Newkirk Sharp is a Nevada native graduated in 2002 from the UM School of Journalism. After taking a year off to travel, she plans to attend pharmacy school and perhaps become a medical reporter.

Bar-Jonah: The media's making of a MONSTER

*A local reporter's tale of the media frenzy surrounding
the case of accused cannibal Nathaniel Bar-Jonah*

BY KIM SKORNOGOSKI

The first time I heard about Nathaniel Benjamin Levi Bar-Jonah, police requested I write a story warning parents to watch out for a pudgy man in a navy jacket walking by a Great Falls elementary school. With no charges and no details why Bar-Jonah was considered dangerous, I refused.

The next day, he was arrested after police learned the stun gun he was carrying was considered a concealed weapon. That was the first front-page story about the odd man from Massachusetts.

I've been writing about him ever since. In two years, the Tribune has published more than 180 stories and editorials about Bar-Jonah, with endless angles to keep local readers interested.

Dating back to age 17, Bar-Jonah was repeatedly convicted of dressing as a police officer to lure young boys into his car, then choking and molesting them. Yet, he slipped through the system, serving months, not years in jail. Weeks after he was released from a mental hospital for sexual predators, he reoffended. Instead of going back to prison, he was sent to Montana to live with family.

Local police suspected Bar-Jonah abducted Great Falls 10-year-old Zachary Ramsay, who vanished walking to school one February morning. That story emblazoned our front page but was buried inside other papers across the state. Few papers outside Great Falls were interested when police found bone fragments belonging to an unknown child buried in Bar-Jonah's garage.

But when accusations of cannibalism surfaced, the story captured the attention of journalists worldwide. Police charged Bar-Jonah with homicide Dec. 19, 2000, saying

they will never find Zachary Ramsay's body because Bar-Jonah disposed of it in chili and stew served to family and neighbors.

My editors — with the Montana Freeman and Unabomber media frenzies fresh in their minds — warned me of the barrage of national press to come. The Massachusetts and international media caught on right away. A TV crew from Germany flew to Montana, and the British Broadcasting Company aired stories about the case

on its radio show. The story was so widespread that some friends of my family were asked during a visit to China if they knew Bar-Jonah.

A Washington Post reporter came to town for Bar-Jonah's arraignment, seeing him for only two minutes on a jail TV monitor. The two Boston papers flew out reporters and photographer teams to spend a week touring Great Falls and interviewing neighbors.

One week, Canadian journalists dove into the story after hearing Bar-Jonah once crossed the border, fearing a missing child could be linked to him. The next week, it was Arizona reporters who were interested after 20

Great Falls women were sent prank letters from someone pretending to be Bar-Jonah. The return address was the home of a Mesa, Ariz., state senator who had nothing to do with the letters.

CNN, Fox News, the New York Post, a Japanese wire service, National Public Radio and the TV shows Extra and America's Most Wanted all did stories about Bar-Jonah. Others, including the Spokesman-Review, picked up Associated Press stories.

Within weeks of each other, Dateline NBC and CBS's 48



Courtesy of The Montana Standard

Nathaniel Bar-Jonah listens to testimony by clinical psychologist Janet Hossack during his trial in Butte District Court in February on charges of kidnapping and sexually molesting boys in Great Falls.

Bar-Jonah

Hours sent crews to Great Falls. Dateline dedicated an hour to Bar-Jonah and the loose release policy at the Massachusetts state mental hospital, while 48 Hours spent roughly 12 minutes focusing on the Great Falls case. As airdates approached, producers from both networks called me to see what I knew about the other newsmagazine's story and when it would run. CBS pushed up its airdate a week to broadcast before Dateline, which in turn pushed their project back a month.

For Bar-Jonah's first trial on sexual assault, kidnapping and assault with a weapon charges in Butte, reporters from the Denver Post, CBS and the Los Angeles Times ventured through Montana. The spotlight will probably shine brightly again for the homicide trial expected to begin Oct. 8 in Missoula. Boston papers, Court TV and other national and regional outlets are expected to come knocking.

With all this attention came the typical stereotypes of Montana — a place where wackos and Old West justice thrive. Great Falls was depicted as the perfect small town, with orderly streets and little crime. To create this picture, reporters universally noted that it is rare to have more than one murder a year in Cascade County and that no one questioned the Ten Commandments chiseled into stone slabs at the steps of the courthouse.

In a story titled "Outrage in Big Sky Country: Montana miffed at Massachusetts for release of accused cannibal killer," the Boston Herald described Great Falls as: "Tucked between majestic mountain ranges and surrounded by miles of wheat and cattle farms, this cowboy outpost on the Missouri River is no stranger to violence. But neither the old fashioned drunken shoot-'em ups nor the crystal meth madness of recent years could have prepared anyone in Montana's second-largest city for Nathaniel Bar-Jonah, the hulking child molester from Massachusetts who arrived in 1991 with his own twisted brand of sinister sadism."

The Boston Globe said Great Falls is an orderly town, its residents having a deeply embedded sense of independence and clear definitions of right and wrong. "And normal still means that when somebody crosses the line, they may get put back in their place with the business end of a hunting rifle." A local dentist was then quoted saying someone would surely shoot Bar-Jonah if he were ever let out of jail.

After a few days, headlines dropped the accused in front of cannibal and serial killer. One story in a Boston paper said Bar-Jonah frequently returned to the Bay State possibly to kill children and "feed his sadistic sexual appetite." Of course, he also could have flown back to visit his mother and sister.

Sadly, this wasn't much of a stretch from what the National Enquirer wrote about Bar-Jonah. Quoting a "police insider," the tabloid compared "that sicko" to fictitious character Hannibal Lecter and notorious Minnesotan



Courtesy of The Montana Standard

Cascade Deputy County Attorney Susan Weber listens intently to a prospective juror's answer in District Court in Butte during the first day of Nathaniel Bar-Jonah's trial in February. He was later found guilty of kidnapping, assaulting and molesting two Great Falls boys and sentenced to 130 years in prison.

Jeffrey Dahmer. Of course, none of the Great Falls investigators had talked to the National Enquirer.

Fearing more stories would further contaminate potential jurors, the county attorney quickly silenced Great Falls police. Desperate for a face and a voice to go on air, national reporters turned to local journalists for information. Like other local journalists covering the case, I was greeted day after day with pink messages from various media sources when I arrived at work. Generally, I talked to people who did their homework and were fact checking and sent the others to the Tribune's Web page.

Often reporters would offer a quid-pro-quo — I help them now and down the road they would help me. Some would ask for sources' phone numbers, a description of Bar-Jonah's home or basic information about Great Falls. Almost always, they wanted to know how local residents reacted to the allegations of cannibalism and an opinion on Bar-Jonah's guilt. I wanted to be polite and helpful, but after several rude requests and the constant insistence to supply all the background material in the 82-page affidavit, my patience wore out.

"Tell me about that guy who kidnapped all those kids and fed them to the people of your town," demanded a producer with the Sally Jesse Raphael show. After repeatedly telling her Bar-Jonah's name, I tried to set her straight, saying he is accused of killing one boy. I directed her to our Web site and even gave her the office number for the county attorney.

In the next few days, she called repeatedly, never remembering Bar-Jonah's name or any of the case background. She asked me to explain the lists filled with children's names found in Bar-Jonah's apartment and wanted to know the names of the investigators and prosecutors.

It escalated from there.

The day before the show was to air, the woman offered to pay me (while I was on the clock working my own stories on Bar-Jonah for the Tribune) to track down Zachary Ramsay's mother Rachel Howard, who lives in Choteau. When I didn't take the bait, she begged me for the names and phone numbers of any of Howard's neighbors, friends or family members, suggesting the show would send them a pizza to persuade them to talk on the show about kidnapped children. I refused.

I'm ashamed to say that I did get duped into talking to the National Enquirer, under the guise of the National Media Group based in Florida. After answering a few basic questions — the population of Great Falls, Bar-Jonah's age, height and weight — I asked a few questions myself and learned that the "media group" produces stories for several national and international publications including The Globe and the National Enquirer.

Police, prosecutors, the FBI, Bar-Jonah's family and others also grew frustrated to see their words twisted. Media savvy Cascade County Attorney Brant Light clearly learned his lesson about pre-trial publicity in February after talking to more than 100 potential jurors in Bar-Jonah's first trial on sexual assault charges. Every one could name Zachary Ramsay and knew details about the homicide. At a recent press conference releasing an affidavit charging the head of the local food bank with a 1964 double homicide, Light handed out the professional code of conduct for lawyers, highlighting what he could and would not talk about.

While sensationalism was the choice for many news organizations, several resisted and got the story right. As to be expected, industry leaders like The Washington Post and The New York Times had well-organized, accurate and artful stories.

But they didn't have a lock on good work. Some of the best stories and best investigative work was done by The Worcester Telegram & Gazette, a Massachusetts paper that covers Bar-Jonah's hometown. Their staff produced a series looking into other people who were released from the state's mental hospital for the sexually dangerous and examined the hospital's policy allowing predators out for week-long unsupervised furlows.

The Hartford Courant was responsible and thorough, having more success than Massachusetts police in tracking down some of the children (now adults) named on a list found in Bar-Jonah's last apartment.

At the Great Falls Tribune, which produced an eight-page section the day after charges were filed, also had to face accusations of sensationalism. Executive Editor Jim Strauss quickly responded to inflamed readers by writing a column. Readers questioned the timing of our coverage — being so close to Christmas — and wondered if we considered how tourists would view Great Falls after reading such accounts.



Kim Skornogoski is the crime writer for the Great Falls Tribune. She has been covering the Bar-Jonah story since he was accused of impersonating a police officer near an elementary school in December 1999.

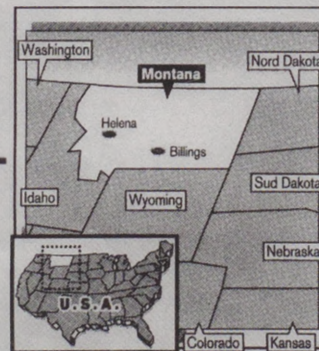
Some people suggested that we enjoyed printing the gruesome details of the case, knowing it would sell papers.

Unlike many of the East Coast papers, the Tribune didn't print many of the cannibalism details that were included in the affidavit. Many of Bar-Jonah's writings describing meals that included specific child body parts were deemed too graphic for our readers, who were also warned by a large editor's note at the top of the front page. And while Bar-Jonah's name in a headline does sell papers, the Tribune hasn't made much money from the story after repeatedly dedicating wide-open pages and paying overtime for reporters to cover the story.

Over the last two years, the Tribune has put its stamp on the Bar-Jonah coverage. I hope that readers associate our work with the quality stories done at other papers, stories that shined because the reporters realized that the news didn't need to be dressed up to sell itself.

Unabomber e setta dei "Freemen": tutto nello stesso Stato

Misterioso Montana terra di orsi, trote e fanatici razzisti *L'America scopre un doppio giallo*



Il gruppo degli "Uomini liberi" accetta il negoziato con la polizia

JORDAN (Montana) — Al dodicesimo giorno di assedio attorno alla loro fattoria di Jordan, nel Montana, gli esponenti del gruppo anarchico di estrema destra dei Freemen hanno accettato di cominciare un negoziato con gli agenti federali. Il primo colloquio è avvenuto ieri su un viottolo nei pressi della fattoria, ed è durato un'ora e

Alcuni componenti della setta degli uomini liberi accanto alla fattoria del Montana nella quale sono asserragliati

mezzo. Le autorità non hanno detto se e quali progressi siano stati fatti per la resa degli "Uomini liberi". I Freemen si sono presentati a trattare armati.

Sono giunti davanti ai federali a bordo di un camion, e quattro di essi sono scesi e si sono accomodati sulle sedie pieghevoli che avevano portato con sé. Altri loro compagni sono rimasti sul camion, seguendo il colloquio a breve distanza. L'inizio della trattativa è il primo segno di distensione da quando il 25 marzo è iniziato l'assedio alla fattoria, dopo l'arresto di due capi dei Freemen, Le Roy Schweitzer, 57 anni, e Daniel Petersen, 53 anni. Un terzo esponente del gruppo, Richard Clark, si è consegnato alla polizia sabato scorso.

Si ritiene che nella casa siano barricati 22 persone, comprese donne e bambini, con molte armi pesanti a disposizione. Il negoziato lascia ora sperare che la vicenda possa concludersi senza la temuta strage più volte minacciata dagli stessi "Uomini liberi", che rifiutano di riconoscere il governo degli Usa e hanno emesso assegni falsi per milioni di dollari.

The headline translates to "Mysterious Montana, land of bears, trout and racist fanatics," and was featured in the April 6, 1996 edition of La Repubblica in Rome after Montana received national attention because of the Unabomber and the Freemen.

Digital Television Coming

... Slowly

Montana broadcasters pay a huge price to go digital, but where are the viewers?

BY SANJAY TALWANI

When staff and guests of the Missoula television station KECI viewed the satellite feed of the 2002 Winter Olympics, they glimpsed the future of television — CD-quality digital sound, an exceptionally clear picture and a wide-screen format.

"This is like going from black-and-white to color," Keith Sommer, general manager of KECI, said of the picture's impact. "It's history in the making."

May 1 was supposed to be a historic date. It was the deadline for commercial broadcasters to begin broadcasting the new digital signals, revolutionizing television with new uses — increased channels, interactive features and a Web-type interface — and a great picture. Eventually, broadcasters will have to quit broadcasting the old way, via analog.

But the direction of the transition, especially in remote and small markets, is anything but clear. Consumers, so far, are treating the new technology more like Laserdiscs than DVDs. Most people who watch a lot of television get it from cable, which offers high-definition TV (HDTV) in only a few markets, or from satellite, which only offers it to those with expensive monitors. With so few viewers, stations are making no money from deploying the expensive new equipment, and consumers are hesitant to buy new equipment without much to watch.

"The simple fact is the light at the end of the tunnel may well be a train," David Donovan, president of Maximum Service Television Inc., said of the technology.

This winter, Montana stations in Kalispell and Butte went digital, albeit with a lower-power signal than their analog channel uses. Stations in Butte and Great Falls followed suit and met the deadline. Others, including KECI, have to await FCC actions before they can begin.

The problem is that there is almost no audience. After years of government action, inaction, big promises and extended deadlines, few Americans are even aware that digital TV signals fill the air around them. For every TV sold today that can receive digital signals, more than 50 traditional analog sets are sold. Many people aren't even aware



Courtesy of KECI-TV

Wayne Nelson from Americom Tower Services climbs the tower on Blacktail Mountain to install the new digital transmitting antenna for KCFW-TV, Kalispell.

that part of what Congress intends is not only to bring the blessings of digital TV, but also to end traditional analog TV entirely, which would render hundreds of millions of otherwise functioning televisions useless.

Spectrum wars

There is a limited amount of space available for channels in any medium, radio or television. This space or spectrum has given rise to conflict between competing stations.

For years, as digital companies looked to America's crowded airwaves for space to operate, they noticed that TV stations were sitting on prime frequencies. Under pressure from Congress and competing companies to justify their free

use of public airwaves, broadcasters pitched a better TV future. In the 1980s and early 1990s, they foretold of high-definition TV, a technology so revolutionary it could keep free over-the-air TV from becoming an anachronism like AM radio.

Around the same time, the government realized it had a potential revenue windfall. Since the new users would pay for their broadcast licenses at auction, they would possibly bringing billions into the public coffers. To keep their free largesse, broadcasters persuaded Congress to give them a second channel for the new digital signals. In return, Congress said, the stations would have to "vacate" their analog spectrum in 2006, ending free TV for those without a digital TV set.

This would also happen if 85 percent of the homes in a station's market had at least one TV that could receive digital signals. Even in large markets, nowhere near 85 percent of the people will have digital television. So as the law stands now, broadcasters will keep that spectrum well beyond 2006. Meanwhile, broadcasters realized that the high-definition picture wasn't the only thing they could do with the new technology.

A single new digital "channel" can carry HDTV and still have room to fool around with. A viewer could have a 24-hour weather channel and sports updates alongside their main program. HDTV can broadcast data with Web-type content, educational materials and public safety information. It can divide the signal into many smaller chunks for interactive services, allowing the viewer to play director of a football broadcast and pick which player to view throughout a play.

Up against the deadline

According to the National Association of Broadcasters, only about 375 commercial broadcasters made the May 1 deadline. About 800 more asked the FCC for extensions. Some station managers joke that they've never seen a digital set unless it was in a showroom. To make things easier for broadcasters and Congress, the FCC gave broadcasters a break last November. The commission said the broadcasters could meet the deadline with a much weaker signal than their current analog transmission. The stations will eventually have to duplicate their analog reach to keep certain rights and protections, however.

Even so, compliance with the digital transition comes at a hefty cost, about \$500,000 for equipment, plus the added power costs of operating a second transmitter and antenna, with little return for the time being. KULR in Billings and KFBB in Great Falls, both owned by Dix Communications, beat the May 1 deadline by two days. But they would not have made the build-up without the FCC mandate.

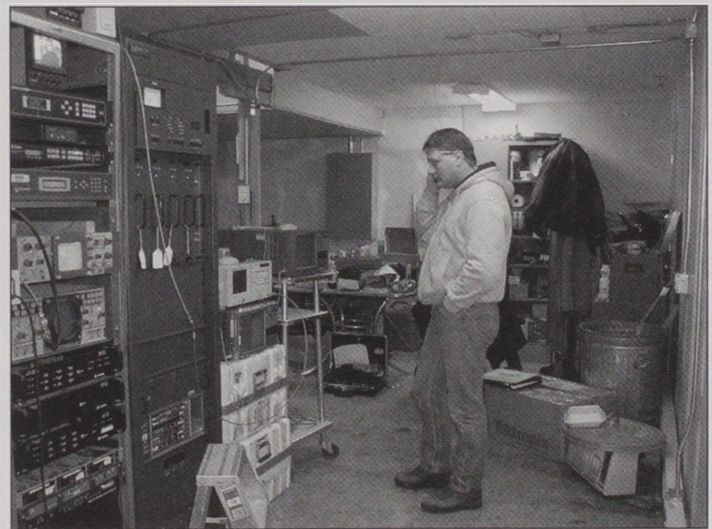
"Those funds have to come from somewhere," said Bruce Cummings, KULR general manager. "The return on investment just isn't going to be there for some time, if ever." For different stations, digital TV could come at the expense of equipment, or personnel or news coverage. Sommer said that his company doesn't have to resort to drastic measures such as layoffs, but employee raises have been lowered for the stations. Although no important news events would be missed, he said, "We might not send out our satellite truck as much."

Small-town crunch

If small-market stations like those in Missoula and Kalispell aren't making money, it's even tougher in places like Glendive, where tiny KXGN expects to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to eventually build a digital plant.

Like many stations, KXGN is exempt from the May 1 digital deadline — not because of its small audience and low cash flow, but because its application for a digital channel assignment is still pending. Sooner or later though, KXGN will have to transmit a digital signal. The FCC has said it will grant a couple of six-month extensions if the station cannot afford to get on the air. General manager Jim Frenzel knows that KXGN and KYUS in Miles City, which have applied for extensions based on financial hardship, will have to dig deep for equipment, even if no one's watching, he said.

"This part of the country will be the last part of the country to buy those expensive sets," he said. "They just don't need or want them." As for HDTV, he said, "I'm not sure that will ever happen out here."



Courtesy of KECI-TV

Brian Withers, an engineer from Larcen, checks out the test equipment set up for the final proof of performance for the Butte digital transmitter at the KTVB-TV transmitter site on XL Heights (also known as the East Ridge) in Butte.

The two stations are in an additional fix because they are owned by one individual, Stephen Marks. Unlike larger companies that own a mix of large and small stations and can use those resources to help the small ones, Marks may have to invest about \$1 million in his three small stations — with little hope of a return any time soon.

What will happen to the smallest markets? Most observers say it's unlikely that small stations, with their valuable spectrum licenses, will ever disappear outright. But they could become appealing to larger station groups that can afford a long-term license. To complicate matters, many rural Montanans don't get their signal from broadcasters' main transmitters but from "repeater" towers, for which there is no solid plan for going digital.

Just in time, federal courts and the FCC have sent strong signals that rules inhibiting media consolidation may disappear. An appeals court told the FCC to change or justify the rule that major networks may own stations reaching only 35 percent of U.S. viewers. (Networks use affiliates to



Courtesy of KECI-TV

Withers checks out the test equipment set up for the final proof of performance for the digital transmitter at the KCFW-TV transmitter site on Blacktail Mountain.

reach the rest of the country.) A federal court also sent back to the FCC its rule that allows ownership of two stations in a single market by one company only if certain conditions are met. Many watchdogs predict a buying spree by larger station groups or that the networks will expand their reach.

Public TV's strategy

Public stations are in a different position than broadcasters. They have to convince members, donors and the government that digital TV is worth the investment. Meanwhile, they face a build-out deadline of May 1, 2003, a year later than commercial broadcasters. Part of noncommercial stations' pitch nationwide is to use the new multicasting and "datacasting" technologies for educational pro-

gramming, such as the Montana Legislature in action.

As if that wasn't a big enough draw, Montana public television stations plan to pass along PBS' growing staple of made-for HD material and even produce their own content, starting with a documentary of Evelyn Cameron, who photographed Montana extensively in the 1890s.

A public television official said he'd like to take advantage of improving technologies that allow a broadcaster to insert local content, such as distance learning courses, as one of the channels in a multicast.

"There's a whole slew of things we could do, from downloading software and curriculum material for outreach schools, to some kind of business," William Marcus, general manager of KUFM, said. Around the nation, pilot "datacasting" ventures on the digital TV spectrum have included emergency response systems and high-speed Internet services. The FCC has also said public stations are allowed to make money from some of their digital spectrum.

Luckily for Montana's stations, the 2001 Legislature kicked in \$1.9 million for the digital build-out, and both stations plan to meet the deadline with less-than-full-power transmissions.

Pushing the market

It's often asked: When will this digital transition finally take place?

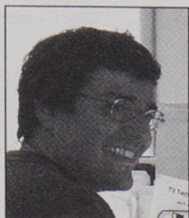
"I'd say, when the Bush twins get their doctorates," an FCC lawyer quipped at the 15th digital TV update.

Broadcasters say that the cable industry could help move things along by carrying digital signals with each main analog signal, something they are already required to do by so-called "must-carry" laws. Since most multi-channel TV households use cable, this would spur demand for digital sets. Cable companies argue that they shouldn't have to carry the digital signal when no one's watching, and that it violates their First Amendment rights to be told what to carry.

FCC Chairman Michael Powell made a stab at breaking the logjam in April with a plan for voluntary action by broadcasters, networks and cable and satellite systems. But the key word is "voluntary," and some see this proposal as just a further entrenchment of a policy of government inaction.

Regardless of when it happens, it is clear that digital television will eventually happen. Electronics retailers are pushing hard to implement digital TV. Stores like Vann's of Missoula want to keep Montana at the forefront of technology.

"Consumers want it. They're hungry for the quality," Rob Standley, the general purchasing manager for Vann's said. Consumers are waiting for the content to appear, and those who move forward with the new technologies will be seen as leaders in broadcasting, he said.



Sanjay Talwani, who attended the master's program at the University of Montana School of Journalism in 1996 and 1997, was a reporter for the Great Falls Tribune from 1999 to 2001. He is now news editor at TV Technology, a trade magazine based in Falls Church, Va.

On the air, and in the bunkers

Sincerely concerned for people, Edward R. Murrow served as a mentor and never got too big for his britches

BY BOB PIERPOINT

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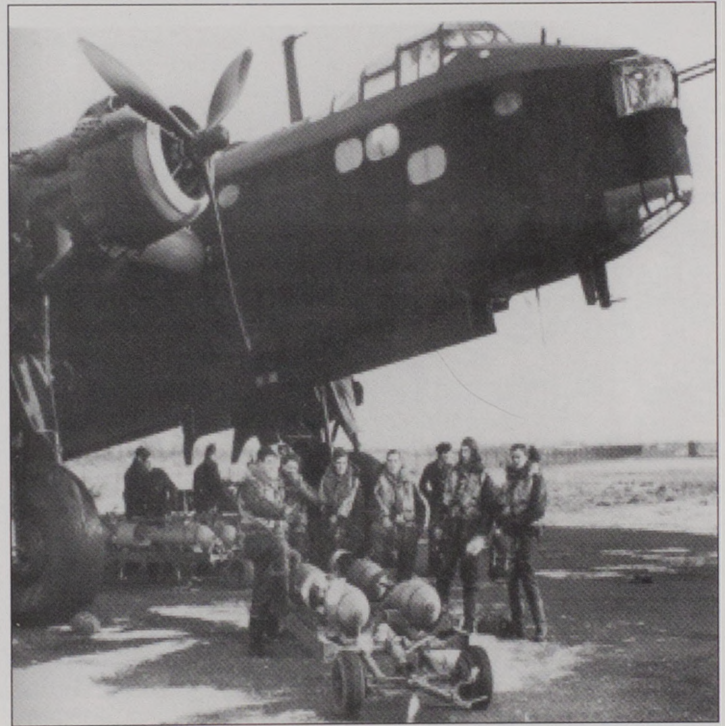
ith a sense of idealism and a belief in the underdog, Edward R. Murrow saw the opportunity for radio to bring events unfolding in Europe right into America's homes. Murrow not only wanted to make his viewers listen, he wanted to "Make 'em itch."

He was a trendsetter for journalists. He was one of the first correspondents to broadcast eyewitness reports as they were unfolding over the air. Murrow's reports, along with the correspondents he hired, set a benchmark for future broadcasters to follow.

The incident that cemented my relationship with Edward R. Murrow came on May 16, 1951. It was my 26th birthday and my initiation to combat. The "Main Line of Resistance" — military jargon for the battle line in the Korean War — was relatively stable at that time. Both the Communists and the United Nations forces were sending out periodic patrols, probing each other's defenses for weak spots. I was at the 24th Division headquarters. I drove a jeep that my boss had liberated from the Army and painted grey with CBS letters on the side. My boss bluntly said that if I was determined to go up to the line at night he really wouldn't worry about what happened to me, but if the jeep was lost there would be hell to pay.

As we approached the area where the forward units of the 24th Division's 19th Regiment were dug in an occasional flare lit the night sky along with sporadic rifle fire. We parked the jeep at the bottom of a hill and hiked up to a trench. Fox Company held the ground. Inside a small bunker were the forward observers for an artillery unit to the rear — a captain, the company commander and a young lieutenant. Infantrymen lay in foxholes with weapons ready (around and in front of the bunker.)

The rifle fire began picking up in both directions, indicating a communist probing attack was under way. Once in a while the chatter of machine guns erupted as tracers lit the night sky. It began to sound like some of that firing was coming from behind us, and I was worried about the jeep and my own line of retreat. The captain was worried about the oncoming Chinese, who were the enemy in that sector, so he and the lieutenant decided to call for artillery support. I walked out into the trench with the young officer, who was to direct the artillery shells over our heads toward the attacking Communist troops.



Courtesy of yesterdayradio.com

On December 3, 1943, Edward R. Murrow flew over Berlin, Germany, in a British Lancaster bomber to broadcast what a run was like for American listeners.

I was carrying a Japanese tape recorder made by an early postwar electronics genius. It had to be wound frequently. Its awkward dimensions, two feet by six inches wide and deep, made the 15-pound recorder hard to carry even with a strap. But it was reliable.

As the lieutenant began giving position reports to his artillery unit, I cranked up the tape recorder. A couple shells whistled overhead but beyond the advancing Chinese. By field telephone the lieutenant ordered new coordinates for the artillery. Suddenly, just as I was narrating into the tape recorder what was going on, he shouted "SHORT ROUND." He dove into the trench, pulling me and the tape recorder with him. The recorder faithfully caught the sound of the shell exploding nearby and my nervous laugh as I tried to explain what had happened. Within minutes I was on my way back to the jeep, and within hours that taped report was on its way back to Murrow in New York.

At that time Murrow was doing a radio show called "Hear It Now," and my first night on the line fit perfectly

Edward R. Murrow



Courtesy of Bob Pierpoint

Holding his Japanese wind-up tape recorder, Bob Pierpoint interviews MASH hospital personnel in Korea.

28th. It was a monumental production job, which Murrow directed in Korea and his producer oversaw in New York.

That first night Murrow took me aside and said that I was to do the early part of his regular evening radio broadcast. It was the premier newscast of the radio network. I was surprised and flattered, but wanted to know why he chose me. Murrow explained that I was the reporter on the spot so I should do the hard news reporting. He would do the commentary during the second half of the 15-minute broadcast. It was the kind of gesture that both made sense and made his colleagues admire him. All of us would go the extra mile for this kind of treatment.

Famous anchors today don't do it that way. Perhaps due in some part to the increasing power of show business in television news, anchors frequently "parachute" into news hot spots, spend a couple of hours getting briefed, work with producers on a script, then do the

"We will follow these men out of the bunkers where they sleep, watch them horsing around in the mess line, see them writing letters home, share with them the alternating tedium and terror of the ordinary combat infantryman"

- Edward R. Murrow

into its format. After he had listened to my tape, Murrow thoughtfully called my parents in California to tell them they would hear their son on his broadcast that night. In view of what they heard, I'm not sure how grateful they were for Murrow's phone call.

Late in the summer of 1952, Murrow decided to do a similar program for television called "See It Now." He scheduled several episodes from Korea for the program. As it continued into the following year, Murrow directed "Christmas in Korea," which was the first time I ever worked directly with Murrow.

Murrow and several other CBS employees arrived in Seoul, along with five camera crews, a few days before Christmas of 1953. Each correspondent was assigned a cameraman and sound technician. Murrow quickly took charge. He asked for ideas from the CBS reporters covering the war about the best way to tell the story of Christmas for the hundreds of units of American troops serving in Korea. He eventually narrowed the suggestions down to the few we could successfully film in the short time available. The thousands of feet of film had to be airlifted to New York in time for editing and airing on December

broadcast as if they knew what they were talking about. Those reporters who are shoved aside by the anchors call it "bigfooting." It has become such common practice in the industry that the networks have now closed most overseas bureaus. The thinking is that reporters aren't really needed in most parts of the world any more, and it saves money.

Fortunately saving money was not the priority in the days of "See It Now." Murrow developed a new technique for telling the story of American GIs serving abroad. As the program put it, "Come with us to Korea. We are going to walk invisibly alongside some GIs. We will follow these men out of the bunkers where they sleep, watch them horsing around in the mess line, see them writing letters home, share with them the alternating tedium and terror of the ordinary combat infantryman."

Correspondents learned the poignancy of young faces aged by combat and the power of television. We would sometimes line up the GIs, and have each one step in front of the camera to state his name, rank and hometown. It was simple but, when seen on the screens of millions of American homes, it had impact.

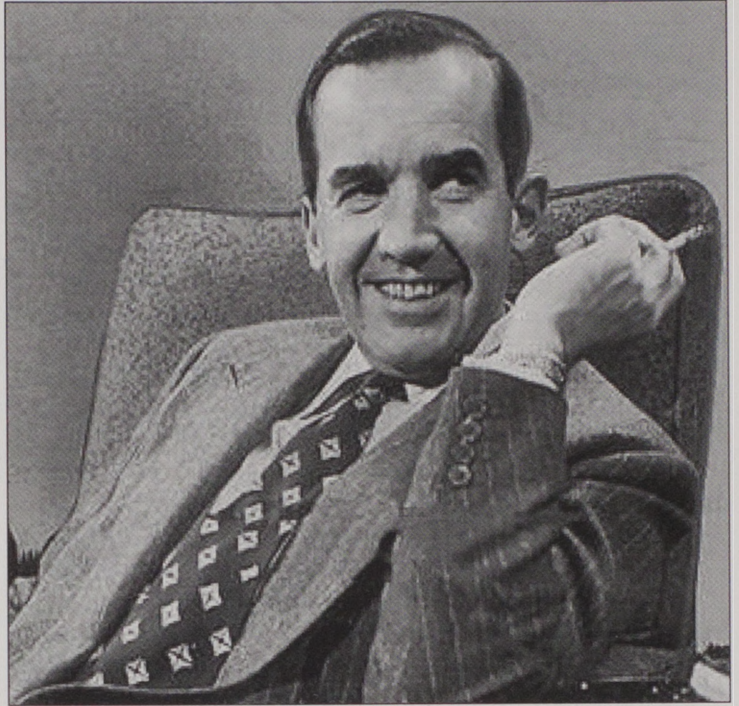
Murrow used the term "reporter" most often in describing

what all of us did at CBS News. He might say "correspondent" on occasion, but never "journalist." I once heard him say that a journalist was really an unemployed reporter. He was adamant about getting facts, as many and as accurately as possible. Once the facts were assembled, Murrow was perfectly willing to draw conclusions from them.

No one ever doubted where Murrow stood on the major issues of the times, but he tried to keep his personal opinions grounded in thoughtful analysis. That was in keeping with CBS News policy that barred broadcasters from expressing opinions on the air. The difference between analysis and opinion is often a fine line.

Murrow ultimately wearied of corporate meddling in the news and found it impossible to continue broadcasting. He accepted an offer from President Kennedy to join a new cabinet in 1961. Murrow went to Washington to head the United States Information Agency.

As America's involvement in Vietnam increased, a Marine officer, who I had known in Korea, called me to set up a meeting. At the meeting he handed me a brown envelope, asked that I read its contents and then deliver it to Murrow. The document inside had a cover with a red slash



Courtesy of det.news.com

Murrow was often seen with a cigarette in his hand, both on and off the air. He died of lung cancer in 1965.

Murrow used the term "reporter" most often in describing what all of us did at CBS News. He might say "correspondent" on occasion, but never "journalist." I once heard him say that a journalist was really an unemployed reporter.

across it and in large letters the word "SECRET." The material related to a Pentagon project the officer was working on, and he wanted Murrow's endorsement of it.

I took the document to Murrow. He was startled to see me carrying information of an important defense secret. I explained that this Marine had helped us do an effective frontline "See It Now," in which he had criticized his own military leadership. For this he paid a price in his career. I added that we owed him something. All this was probably illegal for both of us.

I did not fully understand its importance, but Murrow did. He explained he had been arguing against the project within the Kennedy administration. The Pentagon was trying to develop a chemical that later came to be known as Agent Orange. The chemical was to be sprayed from the air so it would destroy vegetation and the food supply for civilians and communist forces.

Murrow said that both he and the assistant secretary of state for the Far East felt the project was a terrible mistake. Both of them opposed punishing civilians by destroying their food supply. Their argument prevailed much later when Agent Orange was used to defoliate areas suspected to be communist hiding places. Of course in the process the chemical also destroyed crops. Soldiers and civilians on both sides are still suffering from the effects.

The opposition Murrow expressed alerted me to the extent to which some in the military would go in wartime. It also taught me that officials like Murrow, who tried to maintain human values during a bitter conflict, could temper unbounded militarism for a time.

In autumn of 1963, Murrow was fighting a losing battle with cancer. It apparently stemmed from his long and public addiction to nicotine. Shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated Murrow wrote a letter to President Johnson explaining that he was too sick to continue at the USIA, and submitted his resignation.

In the spring of 1965, when he was only 57 years old, Murrow died. Many journalists remember this enormously influential man because he stood up for the obscure victims of bigotry and injustice. He did so, not just in polite parlor conversations, but on the air where it counted and where millions of Americans could listen, learn and act.



CBS hired Bob Pierpoint, along with six others, as the next generation of Murrow boys in 1946. Pierpoint began his career in Scandinavia and covered the war in Korea and Asia until 1957. He spent 22 years as a White House correspondent for CBS News. He retired from the field of journalism in 1990.

Going for the gold, or even the bronze

A rookie Olympic journalist learns the ins-and-outs of international sports coverage during the Games in Salt Lake City

BY RIAL CUMMINGS

We stood shoulder to shoulder in the snow of Park City, Utah, roughly 50 of us, surging toward the orange plastic mesh barrier that separated — shielded might be a better word — Eric Bergoust from the “creme de la crème” of global sports scribblers.

In an out-of-body experience, I looked down at myself, smack-dab in the middle of the “creme,” crushed between a German sportswriter muttering something that sounded like “dumbkopf,” and Michael Wilbon, a heavyweight (literally and figuratively) sports columnist for the Washington Post.

I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, and not just because the German sportswriter’s breath smelled heavily of Limburger cheese. No, my queasiness was prompted by the realization that I was in the fifth row of the seven-deep pack; that Bergoust was speaking so softly than I could barely make out what he was saying; that my Bic ballpoint pen had, in the awful tradition of Murphy’s Law, chosen this exact moment to stop working — and that even by stretching my tape recorder over the shoulder of the poor guy in front of me, it was still, in all likelihood, too far from Bergoust to pick up anything intelligible.

This, I thought to myself, is what happens when you are a Winter Olympics rookie caught in the vise of pack journalism, and when you don’t know enough to position yourself correctly in the “mixed zone.” The Missoulian sent me to cover the Winter Olympics last February in Salt Lake City, something a newspaper of its modest size would do only because a) the Games were nearby, and b) Bergoust, who grew up in Missoula, was the 1998 gold medallist in men’s aerial freestyle skiing when the Olympics were held in Nagano, Japan.

Bergoust had just experienced the bitterest of disappointments. With an opportunity to successfully defend his championship, he had fallen on his final jump, sliding from first to last place.

Now, he had a difficult job ahead of him — explaining his disappointment to the world. He already had talked to TV and radio people farther up the line. Since he hadn’t



Courtesy of The Salt Lake Tribune

Photographers huddle together as they try to get the perfect ski jumping shot near Park City, Utah.

medaled, he wouldn’t attend the official post-competition press conference. So this was it, my only chance. And I was about to miss his comments which were, I knew only too well, my *raison d’être*.

I silently cursed myself. Then I chuckled, bitterly, remembering how the mixed zone had been described in my media packet.

“The mixed zone is so named because of its functional design which allows athletes and journalists to ‘mix’ freely in a designated area near the field of play, following competition.”

Somehow, I hadn’t envisioned it would turn out to be a rugby scrum.

In my panic, I shoved my tape recorder forward, almost

toppling a small woman in front of me (she hissed something appropriately obscene) and tapped the shoulder of a man two rows in front of me. He turned briefly to the side, saw my tape recorder and, miracle of miracles, grabbed it and stuck it alongside his, close enough to Bergoust to save my bacon.

***Salt Lake Convention Center
was our mother ship. We slept in motels
scattered across the city, but rode on vans
to the MMC every morning to eat, gossip,
buy newspapers, pester the media
attaches, attend press conferences
and write stories in an enormous ballroom
that was dubbed The Bullpen.***

I had bungled the first rule of pack journalism: Beat the pack. But I had been saved by the second rule: Help the stranger behind you, because you never know when you'll need help yourself. It was just another day of education at Salt Lake, where you had the Games, and then the "real world," which seemed dim and very distant. The Games were world enough for all of us, totally self-absorbing, framed by deadlines, peppered by security hassles, governed by special rules, and spiced by hundreds of little conflicts and dramas involving the athletes and ourselves. Most of the roughly 9,000 journalists, myself included, didn't seem to mind being wrapped in a little cocoon, where 16-hour work days blended seamlessly into each other; you soon envied those lucky souls who could catnap on a bus en route to a venue, or, better still, steal some blessed sleep on a couch in the Main Media Center.

The Main Media Center, ordinarily the Salt Lake Convention Center, was our mother ship. We slept in motels scattered across the city, but rode on vans to the MMC every morning to eat, gossip, buy newspapers, pester the media attaches, attend press conferences and write stories in an enormous ballroom that was dubbed The Bullpen. It also was from the MMC that dozens of buses came and went, precisely on the half-hour, to take us to the various venues.

Most were at least an hour's drive away, and some were close to two hours. So if you had to, say, be at Snowbasin Ski Resort, northeast of Salt Lake, to cover the men's downhill at 10 a.m., you climbed on the bus at 5:30. Most of the time, we wrote about the competition on site, at media sub-centers. There were predictions that the Games would be snarled by traffic nightmares. And yes, there were some traffic jams. But getting there a couple hours early made all the difference.

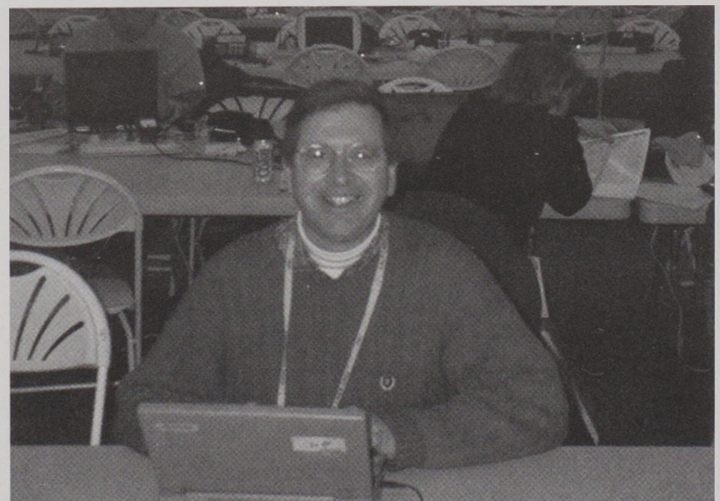
There also were predictions that heightened security measures, a direct result of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, would ruin the fun. There were long lines, yes, and it took a few days to work out the bugs. But by the second week, all of us were pros at getting through the metal detectors and security searches. You put your watch, wallet, tape recorder, and cell phone in a plastic container, handed your computer bag or camera to the security folks, then walked through the magnetometer and prayed it wouldn't beep.

I took two pairs of shoes with me, including a pair of snow boots with metal fastenings. Whenever I wore the snow boots, I could count on being beeped. That meant being pulled aside, stretching out my arms, and having a soldier run a wand over my body. You grinned, if you could, and made the best of it. To their credit, I found that most of the security people were courteous, efficient and even friendly. But you never doubted that they were there to do a job, just like you.

I also was surprised, and pleased, to discover that the stars of my profession turned out to be so approachable, whether it was Bob Ryan of the Boston Globe striking up a conversation about his beloved Red Sox or Mitch Albom of the Detroit Free Press thanking me for a compliment. And it was fun meeting other scribblers from around the globe; at one time or another, I talked at length with writers from Macedonia, Australia, the Ukraine, Brazil, Russia, Japan and Hungary. Not to mention Lawrence, Mass., and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Before heading south, I told my editor my plan was to "go down there and cover the circus."

It still feels that way. For a fortnight, I was privileged enough to run away and join the circus. Believe me, it was a blast.



Courtesy of Rial Cummings
Cummings works to complete a story for the Missoulian in the Main Media Center in Salt Lake City.

Rial Cummings is a sportswriter and columnist for the Missoulian, where he has worked since 1981.



THE *S P I R I T* OF THE

Remember the one-room schoolhouse? That quaint little building on the prairie where children of all ages would assemble each day to learn in one room? Although a thing of the past in most of America, the little schoolhouse is a living, breathing entity in Montana.

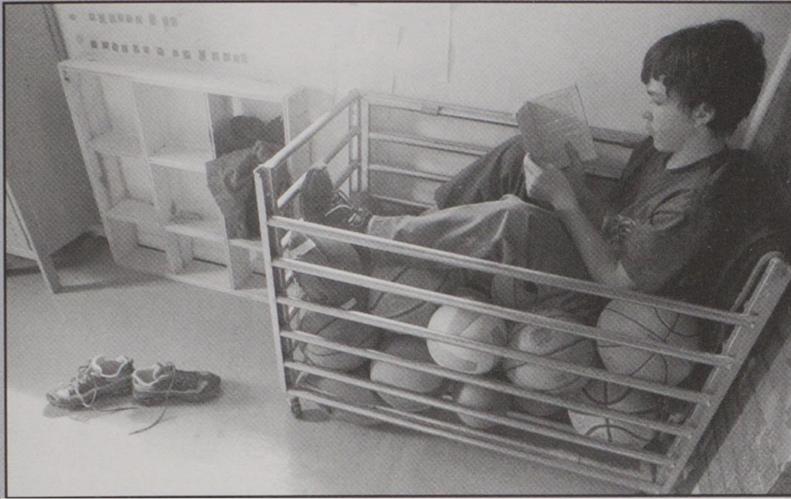
For my master's professional project in journalism, I am visiting as many of these small schools as possible to photograph what rural education in Montana looks like today. The images here are pulled from my first few forays into the Montana countryside.

Times have changed. Today's world is a far cry from the one in which Laura Ingalls Wilder was raised. But at some of these rural schools, that contrast is less marked. One of the things that is most delightful about visiting them is noting the ironies of the modern world meeting that more rustic reality. I've driven miles out on country roads, incredulous that I would actually find the school the map indicated, only to find a classroom of students hooked up to the Internet.

The modern incarnation of the little schoolhouse ranges from the actual one-room schoolhouse to the slightly larger school with a few teachers — still remote geographically and often still the center of its community. Spanning the landscape from east to west, there are roughly 150 of these very small schools, about 80 of which are one-room schools.

As I travel farther afield, I will be looking at how education in these small schools is different from the public education most of us know. I'm interested in how size and location affect learning, what rural schoolteachers' lives are like, the role of the community and the financial issues surrounding small, rural public schools.

For now, I am merely sharing a little of what I have seen so far. Flexibility and informality, a familial atmosphere, a relationship to the land, students teaching other students — these are a few of the characteristics I've witnessed to be the spirit of rural education in Montana today.



Clockwise from left: 1) Mic Eslick, 12, sprints across the yard during recess at Sunset School, near the Blackfoot River. 2) At Grant School, Danny Melle, 12, finds his own reading nook. 3) Mic reads Dr. Seuss to Gus Leigland, 8, at Sunset School. 4) Sunset School students, their teacher and their teacher aide all swish and spit a fluoride rinse on a winter afternoon. 5) A student at Jackson School dons her rollerblades for a recess skate. 6) Rylee Maier, 6, slides down the rails in front of Woodman School outside of Lolo.



ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

photos & story by

O O N A P A L M E R





Clockwise from top:

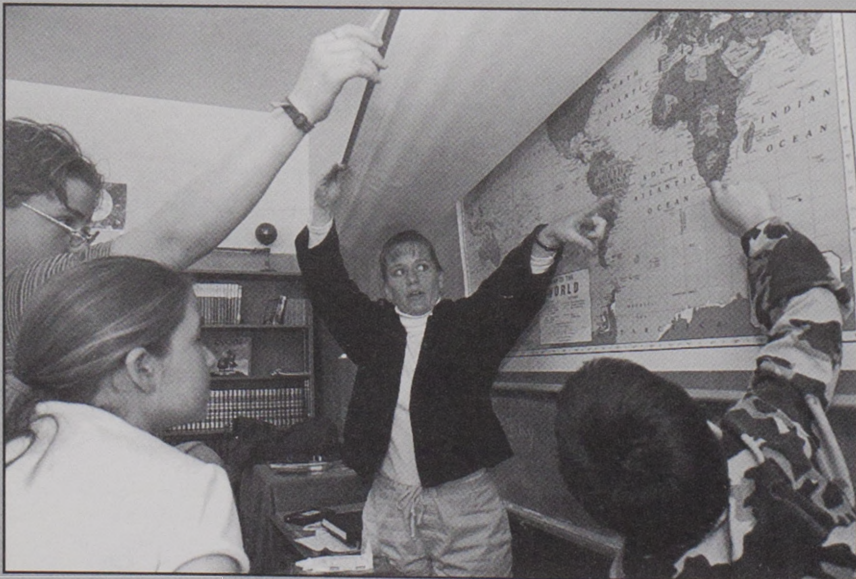
1) Two Potomac students give each other their special high five after planting Easter eggs on the school grounds.

2) Sisters Alexa and Gretchen Gerlach, 14 and 9 respectively, eat lunch with their classmates and teachers in a classroom at Sunset school.

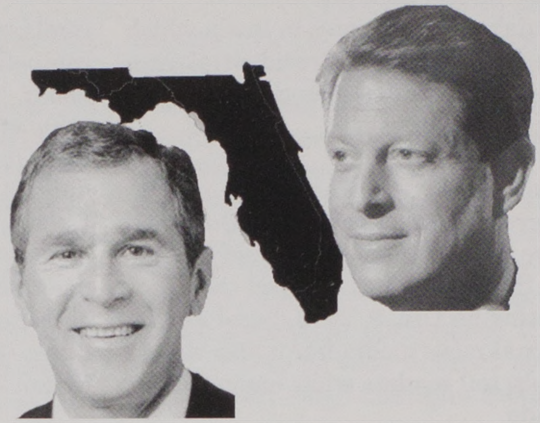
3) At Grant School, the younger of two classrooms files out of the library and computer lab where they had been writing persuasive essays.



Below left: Teacher Marcy Gruber gives a geography lesson to third, fourth and sixth grade students at Sunset School. **Below right:** Seven-year-old Jesse Ferre bounds up the steps of Paradise School after recess. The third and fourth grade teacher, Timberly Kelly, waits just inside after ringing the old school bell.



The story no one cared about



After nine months of analyzing Florida presidential ballots, what was expected to be the biggest story of the year was lost beneath the rubble of Sept. 11

BY LAURA PARVEY

After the Florida vote debacle in the 2000 presidential election, competing newspapers banded together in a consortium to study the disputed ballots. When the Sept. 11 attacks occurred however, the main problem for the consortium became when to publish the results and how to present the information without appearing to call into question the legitimacy of George W. Bush's presidency.

But were the news media just talking to themselves? The publication of the study's results caused barely a ripple among citizens still focused on the aftermath of Sept. 11 and among those who fully supported Bush in his war efforts.

One consortium member told

Inside.com after the attacks, "At some point, the press needs to decide when it is going back to its traditional role of questioning those in power. There is a sense right now, with the war effort just getting underway, that it is not the right time."

Hendrick Hertzberg, writing in the last 2001 issue of *The New Yorker*, said, "It was the right time on Nov. 12, apparently; that was the day the news organizations got around to publishing the analysis of the results. But judging from the lack of discussion that has ensued, it abruptly became the wrong time on Nov. 13. Maybe it will never be the right time."

But just because few cared about the Florida Ballot Project after Sept. 11 doesn't mean the study wasn't worth the money or effort.

Too close to call

Several events made the 2000 presidential election unique and "too close to call." According to CNN.com, around 8 p.m. EST of election day, several television networks estimated Gore as the winner of Florida, but they were forced to recant this estimate when voting results came in from the Panhandle region.

By 2:15 a.m. of Nov. 8, 2000, major networks declared Bush the winner of Florida's — electoral votes and thus of the election. Gore called Bush, conceded and prepared to give his concession address. But less than an hour later, he retracted his concession after hearing Bush led was only by a margin of less than half a percent, according to *The Palm Beach Post*.

Palm Beach County quickly became known as "ground zero" of the election because the county used a "butterfly ballot" and there was an unexpected number of votes for a third-party candidate, CNN.com reported. Votes were scrutinized in other counties and "chad" became known as more than a boy's name around the country.

On Dec. 8, the Florida Supreme Court, 4-3, ordered manual recounts in all counties with significant numbers of presidential undervotes — ballots with no registered vote for president — but the next day the U.S. Supreme Court stopped the counts. On Dec. 12, the U.S. Supreme Court awarded

Public reaction to articles

Segments of letters to the editor in the St. Petersburg Times of Florida

"Doesn't the consortium feel a little foolish now? Months wasted, money thrown away, just trying to prove the George W. Bush is not the legitimate president. And what did you get for your money? Nothing!"

— R. McLean, *St. Petersburg*

"The Florida election 'story' is really a non-story and a waste both time and resources."

— Lloyd VanSchoyck, *Palm Harbor*

"George Bush is the president, and we need to stand behind him in this time of crisis and turmoil in this country. However, we also need to remember how this election was stolen from the voters of this country. There is no way I can believe what happened in Florida during the election was a part of democracy."

— Joyce Sheets, *Tampa*

Florida Ballot Project

Florida's electoral votes to Bush, which officially ended the presidential race but not the controversy behind Florida's ballots.

Members drop competitive spirit

Several newspapers wanted to look at the controversial ballots before the U.S. Supreme Court stopped the counting on Dec. 9, 2000. Local and national news media felt it was their duty to tell readers what happened in Florida.

"We have a responsibility to expose the flaws in the state's election system and how they affected last year's election. We're doing so in hopes that these mistakes will not be repeated in the future. The very integrity of the state's democratic process and the principle that every vote counts are good enough reasons to do this review," Tim Franklin, editor of *The Orlando Sentinel*, told Bob Steele, senior faculty member and ethics group leader of the Poynter Institute.

combine the forces of eight fiercely competitive organizations to review about 175,000 Florida ballots forced some of the biggest egos in U.S. journalism to drop years of healthy distrust and ban together," reported Joel Engelhardt, a Palm Beach Post writer.

The reporter reasoned, "They did it for history. They did it for headlines. They did it to answer a question most found themselves asking at 2:39 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 9 when the U.S. Supreme Court stopped the Florida recount before it could reveal what the nation wanted to know: What information was hidden on those endlessly

"Is it more patriotic to withhold the ballot review because of the terrorist attacks? Or, is it more patriotic to explain how a state's election system disenfranchised tens of thousands of voters?"

**- Tim Franklin, editor
*The Orlando Sentinel***

Washington Post Co. (including its magazine *Newsweek*), *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the Associated Press, CNN, Tribune Publishing (including the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Orlando Sentinel*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*), *The Palm Beach Post* and *The St. Petersburg Times*. The consortium hired the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and finalized the relationship on Jan. 9, 2001.

Publishing the results

The Miami Herald pushed for publication of its review of under votes in April and followed through with its goal. Unlike the Herald, the consortium didn't set an immediate deadline for publication because it didn't want to rush the research center's extensive process.

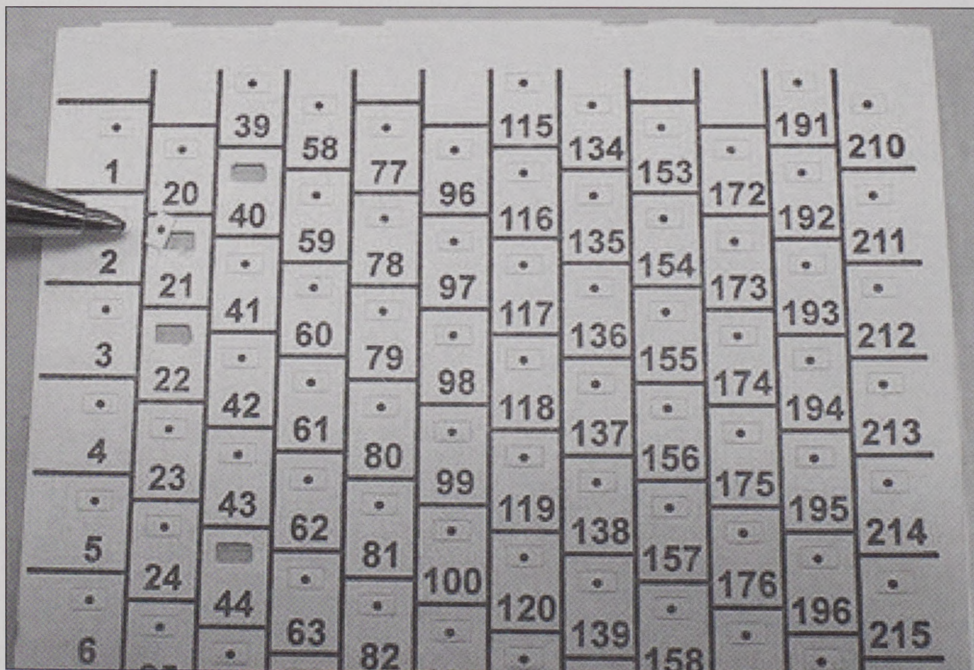
The NORC examined both the undervotes and overvotes, ballots with more than one vote for president. The center didn't analyze the data. The final calculations fell on the shoulders of the newspapers, said Julie Antelman of the NORC. The center's goal was not to declare a winner, but to assess the reliability of the voting systems themselves.

The NORC's review began on Feb. 5, 2001 and concluded on May 29. The news consortium set its first potential publication date as June 30, but the information wasn't ready. The consortium then set its publishing date for Sept. 16, but computer malfunctions pushed the publishing date to Sept. 24.

When all hell broke loose on Sept. 11, the news consortium told the NORC to hold the data until further notice.

The complexities of Sept. 11

After Sept. 11, there was little coverage about the consortium holding off on the release of the information. But some news organizations hit the consortium hard with criticism. The



Courtesy of NORC's Web site

The National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago took on the task of scrutinizing more than 99 percent of Florida's 176,446 uncounted ballots. Pen points to a hanging chad.

The Miami Herald conducted an independent study with BDO Seidman LLP, a national accounting and consulting firm, and was the first to hop on the ballot inspection bandwagon. But the news consortium was also quick on its toes.

"The unprecedented decision to

debated uncounted Florida ballots?"

They also joined forces so the heavy financial load wouldn't be forced on one news organization. Although the project had initially been estimated to cost \$500,000, the cost rose to \$900,000.

The participating groups included the

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported, "to deliberately not report major news is a remarkable decision for them to take. But they say the decision was taken because of a lack of resources and that the war on terrorism made the story irrelevant."

lished on the Poynter Institute Web site.

"In a democracy, citizens function best when they have as much information as possible, including information that may anger, repulse, frustrate as well as information that inspires,

attacks? Or, is it more patriotic to explain how a state's election system disenfranchised tens of thousands of voters? I guess we'll leave it for the readers to decide ... Sure, we may have a reader uprising on our hands. All we can do is try to clearly articulate our rationale to our readers. My hope is that they'll understand the public purpose of this project. If they don't, it may be time to break out the bullet-proof vest," Franklin commented.

Steele offered tips to the media consortium in an article posted on www.poynter.org. News organizations must make sure they explain the purpose of the project and the methodology behind the assessment. They must bring the proper tone to the stories with headlines, info-graphics, word choice and photos. They must focus on the election process not the winner-loser equation and give the story appropriate weight and play in the paper and newscasts.

Not all members of the consortium took Steele's advice. According to an article by Dan Fisher, an MSNBC ombudsman, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and the Associated Press focused their reports on how the additional votes would have affected the elections outcome in four different scenarios. They focused on the winner-loser equation.

The St. Petersburg Times made adjustments to its plans on how to release the information after the attacks, publishing the report in its

"Journalism is sometimes described as history in a hurry. Clearly this project did not happen quickly, but it does help illuminate an important chapter in American political history. Simply put, that is part of our job."

- Paul Tash in the St. Petersburg Times

While consortium members felt the information wasn't irrelevant, they felt it didn't need immediate attention.

"There was no immediate need for citizens to know the information. The value was long-term," Steele wrote in an e-mail interview. "To release the information right after Sept. 11 would have been problematic for several reasons. The story would have been overwhelmed by coverage of the terrorism and the backlash from the public would have been much stronger, therefore minimizing the impact of the project."

As the weeks passed, the Associated Press pushed for publication and in October, Nov. 12 was set for the release date.

Bad timing

The consortium continued to reject claims made by other news organizations that they weren't releasing the results to protect the Bush administration. But, they knew every move they made regarding the project would be scrutinized because the election was wrapped in conspiracy theories. Because of this, when the final date was set the news organizations had another challenge facing them: how to report the information with the least amount of impending criticism possible.

Steele described it as an ethical "Catch-22" — the "benefits of the truth" versus "harm to society." Journalism can serve democracy or be counterproductive to societal interests, said Steele in an article pub-

thrills and pleases," Steele wrote.

Manning Pynn, public editor for The Orlando Sentinel, told Steele, "The primary journalistic issue apart from a commitment to resolve all the unanswered questions is how to present the information. It's a volatile issue likely to upset a lot of readers both for its content and for our appearing, by examining a year-old election, to question the legitimacy of the sitting president. That, of course, isn't what we are doing but that's what many of our readers perceive us to be doing."

Franklin also expressed concern about the timing of the report, but realized the main point — to discover the election process inaccuracies — hadn't changed.

"Is it more patriotic to withhold the ballot review because of the terrorist

Editorial reaction

"It is amazing in these days of war and chaos and planes dropping out of the sky that the warmed-over results of a long-ago election still make the front pages. The vague conclusions released this week make it clear that it is time for those obsessed with rewriting history to finally move on."

— Segment of an editorial published in *The Brockton Enterprise of Brockton, Mass.*

"A recent Gallop poll asked American who they would prefer as president today, and 61 percent favored Bush over Gore's 35 percent. The 2000 election was no one's idea of the perfect way to choose a president. It was messy. But it was honest. The country's attention now must be directed elsewhere and not in refighting last year's election. The man who managed Gore's campaign, William J. Daley, put it best: "Anybody who speculates on such stuff at this point is wasting air, especially in the middle of what is going on."

— Segment of an editorial published in the *Chicago Sun-Times*

Florida Ballot Project

own section so that readers could “study the material as their time and interest allow, so they could come to their own conclusions about the election,” reporter Paul Tash wrote. But the newspaper still heard negative feedback from its readers saying it was time to move on and support the president.

The Orlando Sentinel reported that even Gore said it was time for the country to move forward. “We are a nation of laws, and the presidential election of 2000 is over. Right now our country faces a great challenge as we seek to successfully combat terrorism.”

The Florida Ballot Project ended quietly with many people stating there was no relevance to a story about a year-old election, but consortium members still defended the project.

“Journalism is sometimes described as history in a hurry. Clearly this project did not happen quickly, but it does help illuminate an important chapter in American political history. Simply put, that is part of our job,” Tash wrote in the St. Petersburg Times.

Ten months and more than \$900,000 later, the news consortium had finished its duty to serve democracy. The consortium provided its readers with information they needed to be free and self-governing. While many question the relevancy of the study, there is now a database of more than 180,000 Florida ballots for historians’ use.

“We shouldn’t assume it’s gone forever just because nobody cares about it now,” The Washington Post quoted CNN analyst Jeff Greenfield. “This was after all how the president of the United States was picked.”

Many consortium members sighed with relief after the publication. But just because the review had been completed, it didn’t put an end to the conspiracy theories surrounding the election. The debate about who Americans cast their votes for in Florida has been silenced, but it isn’t over.

Sept. 11 “extinguished the last traces of any appetite for a discussion that might call into question the

The total number of times a candidate’s names were marked on ballots determined to be overvotes.

Gore: 80,775
 Buchanan: 35,631
 Bush: 35,176
 Browne: 33,363
 Harris: 27,705
 Moorehead: 27,648
 Hagelin: 27,372
 Nader: 26,922
 Philips: 24,511
 McReynolds: 22,968

(Source: New York Times, Newsday)

legitimacy of the president, who has his hands full and who needs, and has, the support of a nation united in the struggle against terror,” Hertzberg wrote in The New Yorker. “The damage to democracy has already been done ... An unhappy legacy of the election of 2000 is that that day now seems more distant than ever.”

situation	# of votes for Bush	# of votes for Gore	winner
Certified Florida Results	2,912,790	2,912,253	Bush: +537 votes
If Gore’s request to recount ballots in just four counties had been completed	2,913,351	2,913,126	Bush: +225 votes
If the U.S. Supreme Court hadn’t stopped the recount in Florida	2,916,559	2,916,066	Bush: +493 votes
Allowing only fully-punched ballot cards and correctly marked optical-scan ballots	2,915,130	2,915,245	Gore: +115 votes
Using each counties own standard	2,917,676	2,917,847	Gore: +171 votes
Allowing dimples on punch cards and any marks on optical-scan ballots that indicate a candidate choice	2,924,588	2,924,695	Gore: +107 votes

The Florida Ballot Review conducted by the NORC covered more than 99 percent of Florida’s 176,446 uncounted ballots.
 (Source: New York Times, Newsday)



Laura Parvey is a 2002 graduate of the School of Journalism. She was chief copy editor for the Montana Kaimin and will be an intern for the Missoulian this summer. She hopes to pursue a career in book or magazine publishing.

TAKING A deeper LOOK

*Jodi Rave Lee unearths
buried topics
as the first national
correspondent for
Native issues*

BY DAN D'AMBROSIO

With the traditions of journalism spanning centuries, it is hard to find anything unprecedented in the profession — that is until Jodi Rave Lee.

The Mandan/Hidatsa journalist, for whom Lee Newspapers created a national correspondent position covering Indian issues for the entire chain, embraces an unprecedented move not only for Lee, but also for any newspaper chain in America.

She grew up in North Dakota on the Ft. Berthold Reservation and attended high school in Bismarck. In high school Rave first became aware that Indians, when they did receive coverage in local papers, didn't receive fair coverage. Another side to the story always existed.

Rave Lee also found that she was able to listen to whites as they talked about how they really felt about Indians.

"Both of my parents are Indian, but I do have a full-blooded Norwegian grandmother," Rave Lee said. "I'm not as dark as the stereotype (Indian). White people in North Dakota didn't always realize I was Indian, so I overheard a lot of comments about Indians that couldn't be further from the truth; they get free



Courtesy of Lincoln Journal Star

Jodi Rave Lee surrounded by her work at the Lincoln Journal Star.

paychecks, they don't work; they're lazy ..."

Rave Lee joined her high school paper as a graphic artist and when the journalism advisor asked for a guest editorial, Rave Lee decided to submit one about the United Tribes Powwow in Bismarck.

"That was the whole start of my writing," she said. "I wrote about the powwow, explained what it was, what it meant to Native people — a way of keeping our traditions alive."

Later in the year when the journalism advisor called the newspaper staff together to announce the Northern Interscholastic Press Association awards, he said one of them had received an award for editorial writing.

"Everyone looked at the editorial writer and started congratulating her, but I was the one who won," Rave Lee said.

The award really boosted her self-confidence and offered her encouragement, Rave Lee said.

It was the first example of a pattern that would characterize Rave Lee's career as a journalist — standing out from the rest.

Despite the success she enjoyed and the encouragement she received as a result of her first published work, Rave Lee did not enter journalism school after graduating high school in 1982. Instead, she took a job writing for the tribal newspaper on the Fort Berthold reservation.

One of her stories for the paper took her to the local coal gasification plant, where Natives had a hard time getting jobs. Rave Lee wrote her story about what steps Natives could take to increase their chances of landing a position at the plant, which paid well for the region. She ended up taking the advice herself and getting a job as

Jodi Rave Lee

a laborer in the plant, making \$30,000 yearly at the age of 20.

But after several years working at the coal gasification plant, Rave Lee left to travel around the United States. She explored from 1987 to 1989, and said she learned something important about herself.

"I wanted to be a journalist even during that time," Rave Lee said. "I was always trying to do some freelance writing and that sort of thing. That's when I decided I really want to do this."

It was 1990, and seven years had gone by since Rave Lee graduated from high school. Now that she was sure about the path she wanted to follow, she joined the National Guard as a journalist. After attending the National Guard's journalism school at Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyo., for a year, Rave Lee moved to Denver and enrolled in the journalism program in another community college. She had her

eye on the journalism program at the University of Colorado in Boulder, but needed to establish residency in the state to have any hope of affording the Boulder program.

After a year, Rave Lee applied and was accepted to the journalism school in Boulder. She completed her degree in three years. Rave Lee grew up quickly on her first job as a business reporter for the Idaho Statesman in Boise, Idaho. She found herself feeling as if she was learning to swim by jumping into the deep end.

"It was a Gannett paper, and they expect high output of copy," Rave Lee said. "It was hard to keep up with that pace, especially being in a new beat, a new city. It was stressful."

At the Statesman, Rave Lee also had her first experience with trying to pitch an Indian story to a major newspaper.

"There was a story triggered by the treaty rights of a tribe in Idaho and I really wanted to do it, but the editor gave it to the environmental reporter," Rave Lee said. "The tribe had a victo-

ry based on their treaty rights. It was a good opportunity to explain the treaties are still valid."

Not only did Rave Lee not get to do the story, but she also had to sit by as the environmental reporter reduced the entire matter of the tribe's treaty rights to a single paragraph in the story. Rave Lee blamed herself for not being aggressive enough to get the assignment.

"I don't think I wrote one story in Boise that had to do with Native people," she said.

Her Navajo husband, Frankie Lee, was a civil engineer and was having a hard time finding a job in Boise. Expanding his job search, he eventually was hired by an engineering firm in Salt Lake City.

Faced with a weekend marriage and a long, difficult commute if she were to stay in Boise, Rave Lee called the Salt Lake Tribune and was told they didn't have any jobs.

She sent her clips and resume anyway. She then called and said she was going to be in town the next day and asked if she could stop by. "If you want to," was the noncommittal reply.

What began as an informal visit turned into a job offer covering business for the Salt Lake Tribune. The paper wanted to expand its business beat and created a position just for her. It seemed a remarkable turn of events for the persistent Rave Lee, yet she remained unfulfilled as a journalist.

"I wasn't all that happy there either," Rave Lee said. "I was doing my thing. I wouldn't say I was excelling at it. It was a tough situation, because I wasn't all that hyped up about business reporting. I thought it would get me closer to reporting on Indian issues."

It was part of her strategy, formed by asking editors and fellow reporters for their recommendations on how she could get herself an Indian beat.

"The closest I would have gotten to reporting on Native people would be

as a political writer, and a lot of people said business and politics were interrelated, so (business reporting) was a way in," Rave Lee said.

As it turned out, Rave Lee's reporting strategy worked to a limited degree in Salt Lake City. She was covering a business angle on the Olympics when she learned that the tribes in the area felt they were being shut out of participating in any of the economic opportunities as a result of the games coming to Salt Lake City.

Rave Lee went to the paper's Olympics beat reporter with her tip, and he told her to go ahead with the story herself. Rave Lee jumped at the chance to write the story, in which she compared the plight of the Utah Indians to the involvement of the Native people in Canada in the 1988 Calgary games.

The story ran front page. While the story was a success, making a difference for the tribes in the area, Rave Lee found herself even more uncertain that she could make it as a journalist, because she wasn't happy.

"At that point I'd come to the realization that there are no (Indian) beats," Rave Lee said. "I was doubting myself as a journalist. What I wanted to be a journalist for wasn't happening."

"Stories about Native people only make their way into the paper when there's controversy. Papers weren't covering the news just to cover it."

It was at this moment of doubt and disappointment that a remarkable thing happened to her. No one was more surprised than Rave Lee herself.

"Out of the blue I got a call from Joe Starita at the Lincoln Journal Star saying they had a business reporting job open at the paper," Rave Lee said. "He said that he put out a lot of phone calls and a lot of people recommended me for the job. 'I made 20 phone calls and 18 people said call Jodi Rave (Lee).'"

But Rave Lee was not particularly receptive to Starita's interest in her as a reporter. The job at the Lincoln Journal Star was another business beat. Rave Lee did not want to cover business again and the Lincoln Journal Star was actually a smaller paper than the Tribune. Again, Rave Lee felt pangs

"Stories about Native people only make their way into the paper when there's controversy. Papers weren't covering the news just to cover it."

-Jodi Rave Lee

of doubt in her abilities as a journalist.

Rave Lee wasn't counting on Starita's remarkable ability to find out what people are all about. As they talked, it didn't take Starita long to uncover what Rave Lee really wanted to do.

"For once, I said I really got into journalism because I wanted to report on Indian issues," she said. "I really had an honest heart-to-heart talk with him." Rave Lee told Starita that she didn't know if journalism was right for her and that she was having doubts about continuing as a reporter.

Starita responded by asking Rave Lee to send her resume and clips.

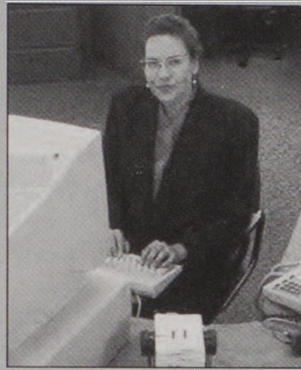
She called to make sure he had received her clips and resume. Starita said he had. After reading them, he said he wanted to kidnap her. He talked Rave Lee into coming to Lincoln for an interview. To overcome her reluctance, he pointed out that she was living in Salt Lake City writing about banks.

In her interview with Starita, which also included editor David Stoeffler, the subject quickly turned to reporting on Indian issues. When she was asked how often she would want to report on Indian issues, which would be in addition to her business reporting, Rave Lee threw out a high number.

"I went over with the attitude that I didn't have anything to lose," Rave Lee said. "It doesn't make sense for me to leave (Salt Lake City) and here's what I really want to do. I want to report on Indian issues 10 times a month, or three times a week, or whatever. I did throw out a high number. I just thought what the hell. I didn't even know if I would stay in journalism (any)more."

After returning to Salt Lake City, Rave Lee received a call from Starita asking her to bear with him and give him some time. The editors were working it out. As she would learn

Rave Lee's Achievements and Honors



Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism is honoring Jodi Rave Lee and the Lincoln Journal Star in June for excellent work in covering Native issues.

Rave Lee will be honored during a gathering in New York City titled "Let's Do It Better" Workshop on Race and Ethnicity.

In the nominating form for Rave Lee, Kathleen Rutledge, Journal Star editor, wrote: "Writers for big-city newspapers tend to gravitate to the word 'desolate' when they write about Indian reservations. Jodi Rave (Lee) wields a richer vocabulary in the reports she

writes about Native issues: spiritual healing, historical grief, Brave Hearts, success. ...

"In the articles and columns we have enclosed for the workshop's consideration, Jodi Rave (Lee) does not gloss over troubles and the controversies in Indian Country: alarming rates of smoking among Native women; the clash of views over Native nicknames for white sports teams; an epidemic of suicides among Native youth and what Native people are doing about it. Nor does she gloss over other features of Native life: a return to the age-old cradleboard tradition; the economic and social achievements of the Ho-Chunk tribal corporation; a generation of Native youth spiritually connected to their culture's traditions. ...

"Jodi Rave (Lee) writes in ways that give her readers a better understanding of the depths and complexities of Native lives, whether lived on or off those reservations, that too many writers see as being about one thing only."

Rave Lee also won first place honors from the Native American Journalists Association in 2001 for best news writing daily. In 2000, she won the first place award for feature writing from NAJA. She won best mainstream coverage of a Native issue from NAJA in 1998 also.

later, the trio was going to Lee Newspaper's management in Iowa with a remarkable proposal.

The call from Starita came. He had a job offer. Then he told Rave Lee

that he would like to offer her the job of being the national correspondent for Lee newspapers covering Indian issues for the entire chain.

"I was shocked," Rave Lee said. "He decided to shoot for the moon on this one and he got the stars."

Starita told Rave Lee that not only had corporate given them the go-ahead to offer the job to her, but also committed to devoting significant space to the project.

"We got all 25 column inches, not 10," Starita said.

"There's a lot of people outside Lee who couldn't believe it," Rave Lee said. "They don't have the best reputation for covering Native issues. That they would hire a Native woman to cover Indian issues caught a lot of people by surprise."

An announcement in June 1998 of the hiring of Jodi Rave Lee and a description of her new beat in all the Lee newspapers brought Rave Lee hundreds of e-mails and letters from excited readers with story ideas, or just words of encouragement. The e-mails and letters weren't all from Native people. Many whites wrote to her as well.

Covering a territory that includes nine states and stretches from the Great Lakes to the Great Plains, Rave Lee quickly moved beyond what Indian journalists call the

"For once, I said I really got into journalism because I wanted to report on Indian issues. I really had an honest heart-to-heart talk with him."

-Jodi Rave Lee

Jodi Rave Lee

three C's of Indian stories — casinos, crime and customs.

In her first year on the Indian beat, Rave Lee wrote stories on Native women smokers, using cradleboards for their infants, the appointment of the new Secretary of the Interior and a taxation bill in the Supreme Court that had an effect on tribes.

"The beat has gotten stronger as I've been able to fill it out," Rave Lee said. "It's a balance of topics."

Rave Lee has attended meetings with all of the Lee editors to get input on stories they'd like to see covered. She was also flown to a meeting of the board of directors so they could meet her. In addition to her regular stories, Rave Lee does

one package each year in which she gives extensive coverage to one topic affecting Native people. Her package in 2001 was a nine-part series on suicide among Indian youth, which is at epidemic levels.

Suicide was a topic Rave Lee suggested at one of the many meetings she has with her editors, and it was Stoeffler who suggested it for the topic of her big package for the year.

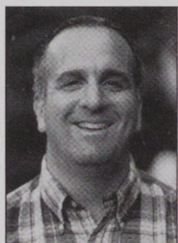
"I still think how incredibly lucky I am," she said.

Early in 2001, Stoeffler was tapped by Lee management to move into the corporate offices in Davenport, Iowa, as vice-president of news. With Stoeffler in a position to affect things at a corporate level, Rave Lee approached him with an idea for the

direction of the Indian beat. She told him that as much as she loved reporting, she wanted to be in management where she could oversee a team of reporters covering Indian stories. Each reporter would cover the reservations in individual states. And there still could be a reporter in Rave Lee's current position, someone covering the big picture.

"It's one step at a time, and that's the next logical step," she said. "I can't cover all these stories."

If Lee takes Rave Lee up on her proposal, the chain will once again be breaking new ground. Perhaps the wake from that action will spread even farther than the first step taken in making Rave Lee their national correspondent.



Dan D'Ambrosio was born and raised in Tulsa, Okla. He received his undergraduate degree in advertising from the University of Tulsa in 1980 and has worked for 20 years at Missoula's Adventure Cycling, where he is director of publications. He is currently working on his master's degree in journalism and will graduate in the summer of 2003.

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QUEER ACTION V. MISSOULIAN: Burning the messenger

Missoulain article fires up members of the community

BY PAUL QUENEAU

When arsonists torched the home of two Missoula lesbians and their 22-month-old baby, during the early morning hours of Feb. 8 the community erupted in anger and concern.

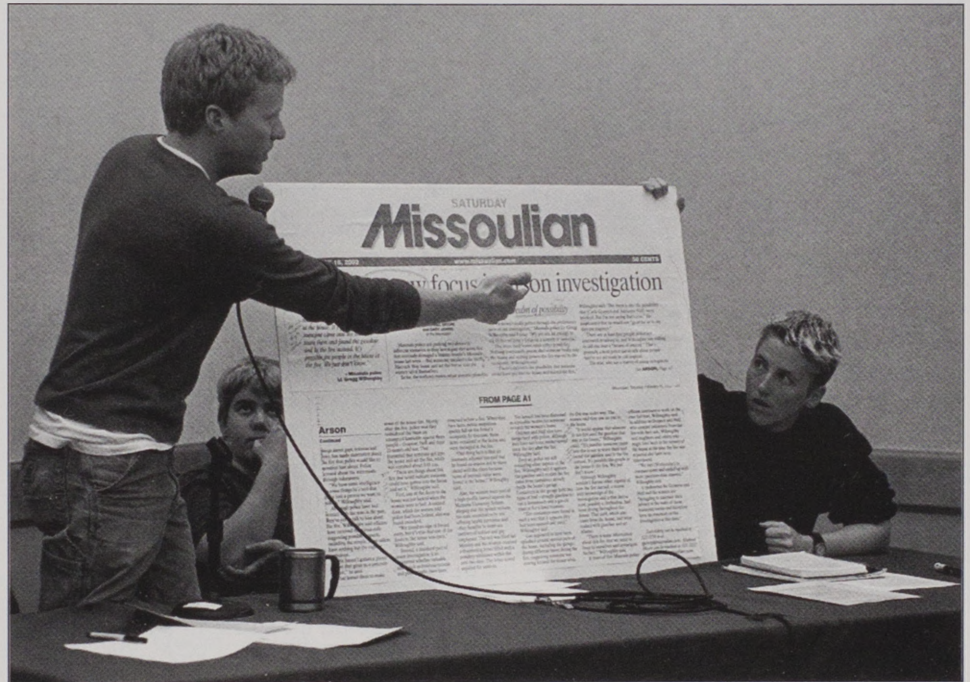
Eight days later when the Missoulain printed an article stating the women were possible suspects, members of the same community erupted in anger again, and the newspaper became the focus of intense criticism.

This outrage culminated in the creation of a group called Queer Action, who threatened to picket the Missoulain office if the paper, among other things, didn't run a front-page apology and have its staff take sensitivity training.

Although the demands weren't met, the picket never took place. Instead, it was called off in exchange for a moderated community forum, where Mike McNally, editor of the paper, was forced to defend the paper's coverage before an angry crowd.

At the forum, Queer Action handed out a packet to members of the audience. It included an explanation of the group's motives, a photocopy of the offending article from the Missoulain and a sheet of paper with a revision of the article "as it could have been," complete with a new title, kicker and pull-quote.

Reader feedback helps a newspaper keep track of what those on the other side of the page are thinking, but when critiquing gets to the point of having a story rewritten and presented in a public setting, it becomes more humbling.



Courtesy of Lisa Hornstein

Jonathan Proctor, left, points out part of a Missoulain article from February 16 that members of Queer Action thought to be misleading as Spider McKnight looks on during a public forum in March at the University of Montana.

Tragedy ignites support

The Missoulain had a challenge in covering the arson story right from the start. Gary Jahrig, the cops and courts reporter, would have normally covered the event but he was in Bozeman for a hockey tournament. Ginny Merriam, the social issues reporter, normally would have taken over for Jahrig, but she was out of town as well.

So it was up to the city government and education reporters to cover a major story that wasn't on their beat. "We did okay the first day," McNally said.

The Missoulain began its coverage Feb. 9 with a front-page story listing the general facts of the case: the fire

was being considered arson; it was started by a person igniting a flammable liquid inside the house; and the women would not speak to the paper about it.

The couple had already made the news on Monday of the same week by being part of a lawsuit filed demanding benefits for same-sex partners from the Montana University System. They had subsequently received a death threat in the mail Wednesday, which contained a white powder that later proved not to be anthrax.

The women and their baby escaped the flames unhurt, but the community response to the arson was rapid: more than 700 people showed up the



Courtesy of Josh Parker

The day after the arson, demonstrators head west on Main Street in Missoula, Mont., on their way to the Higgins Avenue Bridge.

next day in a rally of support for the couple and to denounce hate crimes. Missoula, known for its progressive attitude and prominent gay community, came alive. Editorials were written, relief funds were set up. Fliers saying "Hate Hurts: We Stand Together" began showing up on windows and doors all over town.

Article fires up community

When Jahrig returned, it was up to him to follow up on the coverage of the crime. Following a week of minor updates, Jahrig came out with his first major story about the arson on Feb. 16, co-authored with former crime reporter Michael Moore.

Jahrig said Moore came in to help finish the story because he was going to be gone on Friday, the day before the article was to go to print.

"Any time you write about a crime, you have to be careful what you write," Jahrig said. "If you're a professional, you pride yourself on being fair and accurate."

The main part of the story was Jahrig's work, he said, and Moore just helped him tie it together. Jahrig said he knew that the story would be controversial, but he didn't know how much.

"I anticipated there would be some backlash," Jahrig said.

The article was headlined "Police narrow focus in arson investigation: Authorities say two scenarios still

within realm of possibility." The lead said that police were looking into two possibilities: someone both broke into the house and set the fire, or the women set the fire themselves.

The unity that the community had shown at the rally the weekend before was suddenly shattered. Angry letters began flowing in to the Missoulian, taking it to task for casting suspicion on those not yet officially named by police as suspects.

For those who had not heard the rumor, reading the article was the first time the scenario of the women starting the fire themselves had occurred to many people.

"I swore," said Karen Loos, chairwoman of Missoula Advocates for Human Rights and co-chairwoman of the Missoula Five Valleys Chapter of PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. "I just had a sinking feeling that all the support that was at the rally was basically gone."

Jahrig took the feedback in stride saying he is used to some negative feedback on his stories even though he knows that he has to be careful what he writes.

"In this case people didn't really appreciate us relaying the message, I guess," Jahrig said.

A point of contention for many people seemed to be the arrangement of the facts, and in particular the headline, kicker and lead, all of which

focused on two possible scenarios in the arson: either the women did it, or somebody else did.

"They could have just said 'as in every arson investigation, the occupants are being investigated,'" said Gaiyn Taylor, member of Queer Action.

McInally said he didn't think that the arrangement was so much of a factor.

"There are always different ways you can approach a story, different ways to write a story. Certainly some things could have been done differently. Maybe you could have structured the story a little differently. I don't know that that would have mattered. Any way you slice and dice the words, any way you arrange the story, that information that's bound to upset some people is bound to be in the story."

The main reason for discussing the couple's possible culpability in the article was because it was a rumor that needed to be either confirmed or dispelled.

"It was information that was being widely discussed in the community, the rumors were inescapable," McInally said, "and in fact what happened with the story that we published on Saturday I think put some meat on the bones."

Direct action

As response to the article began to arrive in letters and phone calls, McInally got into his normal mode of being open for discussion, and telling people he would take their thoughts under consideration.

But on the following Friday, McInally got a fax from a group he had never heard of, with only an e-mail address for a contact.

Queer Action is a "direct action" group, a form of protest made popular by groups like Earth First!. Rather than lobbying, educating and having workshops, they practice direct action, or a "direct response to an issue of concern," according to their mission statement.

Using a series of escalating responses, direct action targets policies, laws, actions and statements, but not people. Although actions are nonviolent, they include the possibility of civil disobedience, where

there is risk of arrest if a law is broken.

When the article in the Missoulain was published, some of the members-to-be of Queer Action were taking part in a direct action workshop, and they decided to use the knowledge to start their own group.

"We did not form to do actions against the Missoulain," said group member Christina McKnight. "It just happened that way."

Queer Action said the Missoulain was "sensationalizing ordinary facts" by structuring the article in a way that hyped the situation of victims being suspects, something they understood was an ordinary part of every investigation, and therefore not news.

"The article was incredibly damaging for many reasons," said Queer Action member Sarah Howell. "It wasn't libelous, so to speak, but the choices they made, the length, the arrangement of facts, I feel were very conscious."

Queer Action also felt the Missoulain was treating the victims differently in this case because they were lesbians.

"If it was a straight couple with a baby, would it have been slanted this way?" McKnight said.

So on Friday, Feb. 22, Queer Action sent the Missoulain a fax issuing six demands that would result in a picket if they were not met. That Sunday, the group tucked a flier in practically every Missoulain in every

Wednesday at 5 p.m. if the demands were not met.

As Queer Action gave only an e-mail address to communicate with, McNally was forced to try to make amends with the group without actually talking to them.

He offered to meet the group in a public setting to discuss the matter, a move that prompted many in the gay community to begin criticizing the planned protest.

"My offer has always been to go out and talk about the paper's coverage," McNally said. "(That offer) was made to Queer Action."

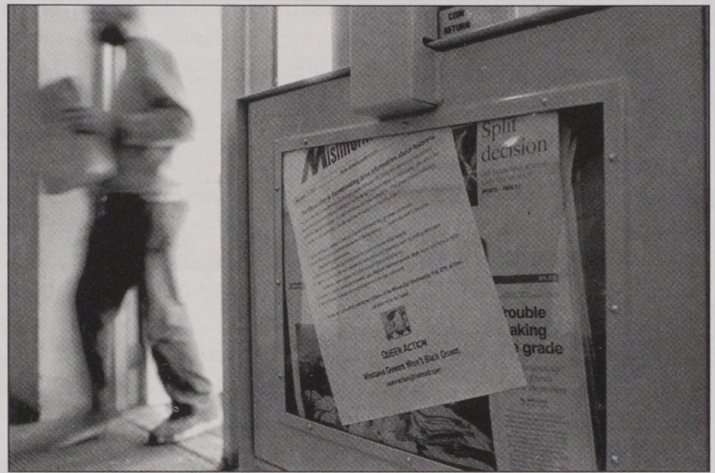
Community forum

The picket was finally called off at the last minute in favor of a community forum, and McNally gave some suggestions for a possible moderator and location, but it was ultimately up to the Queer Action to plan the event.

As the forum began the following Monday night at the University of Montana before an audience of about 75, McNally was surprised at the

written the Feb. 16 article and a promise that the paper would change the way it was covering the arson.

McNally responded by saying that although he was always happy to have feedback about the paper's cov-



Courtesy of Mike Cohea

A flier from Queer Action sits inside of a Missoulain paper box on the University of Montana campus in Craig Hall. The direct action group blasted the newspaper for several "sensationalized" articles that appeared to focus suspicion on Adrienne Neff and Carla Grayson for setting the fire in their own home.

erage, he still stood behind everything the Missoulain had published on the arson.

"I've been accused that our coverage has been shameless sensationalism," McNally said at the forum. "This story has not been unverified in any way. It's been accurate."

He also bristled at the comment that recent articles were an attempt by the paper to meet some of Queer Action's demands.

"The one thing said here that ticks me off a little bit was that recent articles were an attempt to atone for past sins," McNally said at the forum. "We were working on these stories for weeks, I did not accede to the Queer Action demands. I'm not going to do that."

The audience was mostly critical of the Missoulain.

Peter Shober, pastor of University Congregational Church, was one of those who spoke. McNally is an active member of University Congregational.

"Mike (McNally) is a dear friend of mine, but I'm not afraid to tell him I did not like this article," he said at the forum.

Merriam had written a preview of

"The article was incredibly damaging for many reasons. It wasn't libelous, so to speak, but the choices they made, the length, the arrangement of facts, I feel were very conscious."

**- Sarah Howell,
Queer Action member**

newspaper stand around Missoula.

The flier, which used an imitation Missoulain insignia was titled "Misinformation" and included the sentence "The Missoulain is disseminating false information about lesbians" in bold lettering.

The flier included faxed demands already faxed to the Missoulain, and threatened a picket the following

rigid structure of the conversation, with opening and closing speeches, timed rebuttals and other formalities.

"I really didn't know what to expect," McNally said. "I was a little taken aback at how formatted the meeting turned out to be."

Queer Action demanded an apology for the way the Missoulain had

Queer Action v. Missoulian

the forum, and attended with hope of covering it in the next day's paper.

She said she had a false impression of what the event would focus on.

"I went there with the idea of possibly covering it. Not about just us, but about all media," Merriam said.

But after seeing that the forum was only going to center around that one article, she decided she couldn't write an objective story when it was so close to home.

"I didn't write a story because I couldn't imagine writing a credible story," Merriam said.

McInally said he was disappointed with the outcome of the forum.

the individual word choices and placements. But I really feel that acknowledging the power of language, especially as the editor of our only daily newspaper in Missoula, is of utmost importance."

"Afterwards, though, I feel that we haven't seen any more truly damaging things," Howell said.

Column asks for time

Little has been written about the arson since March 6, when Fred Van Valkenburg, the Missoula County attorney, asked police to stop talking to the press about the case.

Van Valkenburg wrote a guest column in the Missoulian April 16 titled

period," said Loos. "I think it has helped the gay community feel a little bit better about the justice system."

Mona Bachmann, a member of the Outfield Alliance, a gay and lesbian group of faculty and staff at UM, agrees.

"I think it has helped," said Bachmann. "They (the police) should have kept a lot to themselves from the very beginning."

However, Howell had a different opinion.

"I thought it was horrible," she said. "He said what he had to say well, and he was respectful, but I really feel like his whole message was stay silent and everything will be okay. I really feel (it's dangerous) to applaud the people of Missoula for not asking questions, for not seeking out information about what's going on in their community, with their police and their safety."

Van Valkenburg said the silence is temporary, and answers to questions people have will eventually be answered.

"It's just a short term thing here," he said. "Certainly (the public) wants to know what happened, and at some point they're going to have to be informed."

"You've got to try and provide some answers, too."

Van Valkenburg said he hopes his editorial in the Missoulian has helped give people confidence that the investigation has not been forgotten.

"I wanted to give people enough confidence that law enforcement is doing its best and making progress on the investigation."

Whether the crime will be solved anytime soon is anyone's guess, Van Valkenburg said.

"All I can say is that I hope so. It would be almost like trying to read a crystal ball, but I hope it will."

"There needed to be a cooling-off period. I think it has helped the gay community feel a little bit better about the justice system."

**- Karen Loos,
chairwoman of Missoula Advocates for Human Rights**

"From my perspective, what I wanted to do mainly was listen and respond. I really wasn't interested in going to the forum and debating the details of whether the coverage was appropriate," he said. "I think what happened at the forum didn't make it any easier for anybody to come out of their corners."

Howell of Queer Action had mixed feelings about the event.

"I feel good that it happened, and I think it's a positive step toward seeing more community involvement, and more acknowledgment of the responsibility of newspapers, especially in places like Montana where we often don't have more than one daily newspaper," Howell said. "But the end result coming from Mike McInally was pretty disappointing to me. For me, his whole take on it was that he didn't want to quibble about

"Quiet is allowing investigators to do their job in arson case," which praised the success of the silence.

"I have been pleased with the response to my request — not only within law enforcement circles, but also within the community as a whole," Van Valkenburg wrote. "Because public speculation and inquiry have been relatively quiet in the past month or so, investigators in this case have been able to focus their attention on the day-to-day work involved in a difficult case such as this one, rather than having to spend their time defending or justifying any motives attributed to their work."

In a later interview about the column, Van Valkenburg said, "It has sort of settled the community down."

Others active in the gay community agree.

"There needed to be a cooling-off



Paul Queneau is a 2002 graduate of the University of Montana School of Journalism. He was the cops and courts reporter for the Montana Kaimin and reported on this incident. He was also the Webmaster for the paper for two and a half years and is an award-winning nice guy.

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From the classroom to the newsroom,
the University of Montana played a key role in
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"For the past 25 years, I have been involved in writing, reporting, copy editing, headline writing, photography, layout and production in both newspapers and magazines. I learned those crafts at the UM School of Journalism, and not a day goes by that at least one of my professors isn't sitting on my shoulder, encouraging me to do my best, do it right and have fun."

— Larry Winslow, Assistant News Editor

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"Learning at UM's School of Journalism was always a hands-on experience. My professors had high expectations for me to get out and dive into story topics. Looking back, I now know how valuable that experience was."

— Beth Britton, Business Editor

REVIVING RELIGION COVERAGE

The tragedy of Sept. 11 brought more attention to religious differences in America and thrust religion issues into the forefront

BY JOHN HAFNER

Sammy Kershaw, a country western singer, said the three subjects never to bring up in conversation are "politics, religion and her." Fortunately, this is not true in journalism. Religion has earned its place in the American press, and Sept. 11 focused journalists' attention on the role of religion in both private life and international news.

"Before Sept. 11, many Americans took for granted our ability to live with deep religious differences in this country, and many of us ignored the role religion plays in world affairs. Now we know better," said Charles Haynes, senior scholar for the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, in an October 2001 online article.

Religion stories involving Sept. 11 have dominated the news since the attacks, and they have veered in two distinct directions. One type lauds America's ability to rise above calamity and celebrate the religious diversity of its people. Stories with headlines like "Thousands gather to listen and pray" run with photos depicting people of various races and religions joining together under a banner of love, peace and tolerance.

The other type of story — the one that has been reported more often — concerns the widespread fear that Muslims in America would be the targets of racial profiling and hate crimes.

With photos of Palestinian children dancing in the streets when the towers fell, it came as no surprise that there would be fear of mass hatred toward

Muslims. These stories have had headlines like "Muslims fear attacks may cause backlash."

"The dominant impulse was to show American Muslims as loyal, law-abiding people, who should not be blamed for terrorist acts apparently committed by a few of their co-religionists," said Mark Silk in an online article for the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life. "Lines were drawn

ty. They encourage the media to include a variety of Arab opinions and perspectives in all types of stories. For example, they recommend seeking out an Arab businessman's perspective in a business or finance story.

"Some of the pertinent points covered ... say that we should not stereotype, misrepresent, oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context. And that we should give voices to the voiceless, avoid imposing our own cultural values on others, and tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even if it is unpopular to do so," said Al Cross, SPJ president and political columnist for The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky.

The SPJ's guidelines seem extreme to some journalists, especially guideline 12, which advises reporters to "ask men and women from within targeted communities to review your coverage and make suggestions."

Stephen Hayes, staff writer for The Daily Standard, lashed out at the guidelines in an Oct. 31 editorial.

"Imagine the outcry if a newspaper editor permitted a Catholic priest to revise — before publication — a reporter's story about a pro-life rally," Hayes said. "Or if a columnist called in a tobacco executive to edit an article about the hazards of smoking."

Hayes said the SPJ's guidelines are "absurd" and "come perilously close to calling for racial and religious quotas in both news photography and composition...They focus so obsessively on avoiding 'offensive' words and phrases that truth and accuracy seem like secondary concerns."

Hayes said most Americans know that Muslim terrorists don't represent Islam as a whole. "Straightforward, accurate journalism" eliminates the need for the guidelines, he said.



between the patriotic Muslims at home and the bad ones over there," Silk said.

Journalists led the charge for open apologies to Muslims. On Sept. 14, The Denver Post declared, "As Americans bristle with patriotism in the wake of the terrorist attacks, we also must shoulder some shame over ignorant, vengeful attacks on Muslims and others who simply appear to be Muslims."

The diversity committee of the Society of Professional Journalists went as far as adopting 12 guidelines for how journalists should cover Islam, Arabs, Arab-Americans and Muslims. The guidelines are meant to provide direction on choosing and covering stories that demystify the Arab communi-

Lynn Schwanke, religion editor of the Missoulian, expressed a similar opinion. Good reporting should eliminate the threat of religious or racial profiling, and the push for political correctness can cause reporters to "get all tangled up in jargon" and sacrifice clarity, she said.

Jim Strauss, editor of the Great Falls Tribune, said "the spirit behind the guidelines is on target," but journalists need to find a "middle ground" that allows them to "inform without offending."

"If we muddy our copy, who are we really serving?" Strauss said.

There also has been an increase in stories about Israel and the on-going war between Jews and Palestinians. With continued coverage of Bush's claim that the war on terror will extend to all nations who harbor terrorists, it's likely that religion will continue to dominate the news. And with concern over prejudice and heightened sensitivity toward Muslims, as demonstrated by the SPJ's guidelines, it's evident that there are no easy solutions to the problems posed by religious issues and controversy.

With religion under a media microscope since Sept. 11, a few prominent religious leaders of non-Muslim persuasion were bound to stick their feet in their mouths. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who are no strangers to stirring up controversy in the name of religion, did just that.

On Robertson's cable television show, "The 700 Club," Falwell blamed "the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians" for what Robertson called "God lifting his protection over this nation."

"Instead of rallying the religious right, Falwell and Robertson's comments provoked the wrath of a public press unified by crisis and in no mood for religious finger pointing," said Michael Navarstek in an online article for the Greenberg center. "Neither minister was prepared for the astonishing barrage of condemnation that fell upon them from media outlets of all shapes and sizes," he said.

James Werrell, a columnist for the Rock Hill, S.C. Herald said, "Add the '700 Club Jihad' to the list of fundamentalist extremists who pose a threat to the future of America." The Baltimore Sun called Falwell a "reminder of our own fault lines: One

man talking about the judgment of God is a warning about how we will stand — together or apart."

Some journalists chose instead to give credit to those religious leaders who preach patience rather than lash out. The Minneapolis Star Tribune said, "Falwell gets headlines for his flame-throwing, but thousands of somber and reasoned voices speak for Christianity."

Falwell admitted on "Good Morning America" that his comments "missed

Science Monitor article. A December survey of 1,500 adults by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 78 percent of Americans believe religion is increasing in influence, compared to 37 percent just six months ago. It's the highest measure of religion's popularity in 40 years.

For many, the survey is proof that the United States has entered a new era of increased spirituality, in which religion is no longer merely a private matter.

"Writing well about religion is fundamentally at odds with journalism. If journalism is about skepticism and religion is about beliefs, you've got a clash of cultures. To cover a priest, how can you say, 'You fool. How can you say someone has risen from the dead?'"

-Ellen Hume

in an article for American Journalism Review

the mark," but Robertson refused to apologize. "He insisted that his struggle to bring God back into the national consciousness must go on," Navarstek said.

The stories stemming from Sept. 11 are just one type that religion reporters must tackle. The beat covers a number of diverse issues. Anything from the dangers of religious profiling to the demand for nondenominational Christmas trees is fair game. Despite limited budgets and frequent cutbacks, newspapers are reporting on the religious issues that matter to their readers. Associations for religion reporters are leading the way toward craft improvement by helping reporters define and report issues accurately and objectively.

Unlike public affairs beats, the religion beat forces reporters to make news judgments about personal faith and belief in things unseen. This subjectivity often scares many reporters and editors away from stories that matter to their readers. With increasing numbers of Americans placing greater importance on faith and religion the stories need to be covered.

"The number of Americans who say religion now has a higher profile in society has more than doubled since the beginning of the 2001," said Jane Lampman in a Dec. 7 Christian

"It's a quiet revolution that has been building since the 1980s, but this presidency has reinforced the trend," said Haynes. "This widespread influence of religion is now more visible, more welcome and more diverse," he said. The United States is also seeing increased participation in public policy debates from a greater mix of religions, not just Catholics or other conservative groups, Haynes said. "Many other religions are finding their voice, so there's a 'diversity push' for more religion in public life," he said.

The Pew survey also shows that Americans are heeding Bush's call for tolerance and acceptance of Muslims. Favorable views of Muslims have risen from 45 percent in March 2001 to 59 percent in December. Furthermore, the president's own core constituents have shown the biggest turnaround regarding Muslim acceptance; 64 percent of conservative Republicans feel favorably toward Muslims, compared to just 35 percent in March 2001.

Bush has made his faith very clear. The president makes frequent references to God during press conferences and when addressing the nation. Media scholars believe his personal faith has opened the door for an increased awareness and acceptance of all religions in the news and public life.

Religion Coverage

Reporting on this push for more religion won't be easy, though.

In a 1995 article for the American Journalism Review, Ellen Hume said the conflicting ideologies of religion and journalism often make religion reporting extremely difficult.

"Writing well about religion is fundamentally at odds with journalism," Hume said. "If journalism is about skepticism and religion is about beliefs, you've got a clash of cultures. To cover a priest, how can you say, 'You fool. How can you say someone has risen from the dead?'"

Covering issues about people's personal faith and relationship with God poses problems not faced by reporters with hard news beats. Getting the story and showing respect for those involved can be difficult, especially if the story involves a religion unfamiliar to the reporter.

If reporters know little about religion, they're likely to seem ignorant to

their readers and sources. On the other hand, if they're religious and sensitive about their views, they're likely to offend their sources. Perhaps the best way for religion reporters to do their job is to simply get informed about all the religions they have to cover.

Strauss said religion reporters represent their readerships without allowing their personal beliefs to compromise their reporting. "A lot of people think journalists aren't good Christians," he said. "Whatever my beliefs are, I don't wear them on my sleeve."

Schwanke said it can be difficult for reporters to understand other faiths, but they should "never attempt to tell people what they should believe."

She said a small budget and lack of reporters to assign to religion stories has forced her to "rely on the faith community" for content. Schwanke depends on local churches to write

their own stories about the issues affecting their congregations, she said.

Schwanke's strategy for selecting stories each week is simple. "I try to keep the page open to all faiths," she said. "The page belongs to the readers, to the community and to western Montana."

There's no doubt that readers desire more religion coverage, but that doesn't make the job of finding religion correspondents to cover the beat any easier. Full-time religion reporters are few and far between. Newspapers have suffered cutbacks in religion reporting positions nationwide. Over the past year, full-time religion reporting beats have been eliminated at the several newspapers and hiring freezes have also hurt religion reporting, Walsh said.

It's the same story in broadcast journalism. In October 2001, ABC fired Peggy Wehmeyer, who had been television's sole religion correspondent

Religion Resources

Many reporters and editors admit they don't always know where to turn to get a crash course in religion. The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center reported in 2001 that 60 percent of religion writers don't have any formal training in religious studies, but 90 percent said they would benefit from more training.

Religion Newswriters Association is a craft improvement association for religion reporters. RNA's Web site posts information on upcoming workshops and training seminars, as well as access to religion glossaries, stylebooks, links to various religion sites, a religion reporting job bank, religion and media research and recent religion news stories.

(www.religionwriters.com)

Religion News Service produces both a daily and weekly news service and a photo/graphics service for issues pertaining to religion, ethics, spirituality and morality.

(www.religionnews.com)

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life seeks to promote a deeper understanding of how religion shapes the ideas and institutions of American society. The Forum explores how religious institutions and individuals contribute to civic life while honoring America's traditions of religious liberty and pluralism.

The Forum serves as a place for informed discussion and new research about the ways in which faith and public affairs intersect, functioning both as a clearinghouse and a town hall.

(www.pewforum.org)

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly is a TV show that provides coverage of religion and ethics news. It features and profiles people, trends and values of spiritual life. The program is distributed to PBS stations nationwide on Fridays at 5 p.m. EST.

The Web site features information about each week's program, a monthly interdenominational calendar, a link to Thirteen's Pressroom archive listing previous segments, and more. The Viewers Guide, which includes essays, discussion questions, and resources, may be downloaded from the Web site or ordered free of charge.

(www.thirteen.org/religionandethics)

Northwestern University's Medill School Journalism offers a dual master's degree in journalism and religion in conjunction with the university's Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

(www.medill.nwu.edu)

Garrett-Medill Center for Religion and the News Media offers a 10-week seminar called "Quarter in Religion, Spirituality and Values," which is designed to help reporters cover religion. It is a condensed course and is ideal for the working journalist who has no time to go back to school and earn another degree.

(www.medill.nwu.edu)

since 1994. According to ABC, she will not be replaced. A Nov. 13, 2001, brief in the American Enterprise Online said, "Without a single correspondent assigned to religion, television coverage of religion will become even shallower than it is now. This is a deployment of resources that simply does not match the level of importance that everyday Americans place on religion."

"A lot of people think journalists aren't good Christians. Whatever my beliefs are, I don't wear them on my sleeve."

- Jim Strauss
editor of the Great Falls Tribune

Recent findings regarding the legitimacy of religion in society, such as those obtained in the Pew survey, could persuade media executives to create more religion reporting positions.

The present shortage of religion reporters is a major shift from the 1990s.

"The number of journalists assigned to full-time positions covering religion swelled dramatically in the 1990s, and scores of newspapers introduced expansive weekly 'faith and values' sections at the beckoning of focus groups hungry for an increased presence of faith and religion in the media," Walsh said in a Dec. 9 online articles for the Leonard Greenberg Center.

The demand for increased religion coverage has continued into the new millennium, but the cutbacks in religion reporting jobs have made it tough to cover the ever-broadening beat. The few full-time religion reporters working the beat today have a responsibility to accurately report on issues affecting a variety of faiths, and to represent their readers fairly.

Sept. 11 showed the United States that, despite their religious differences, Americans feel a collective sense of urgency to get closer to God. A look at history shows Americans consistently turn to God in times of trouble.

"The words 'In God We Trust' were added to our currency in the wake of the Civil War, and 'under God' was added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 at the height of the struggle against communism," Haynes said. "That's because a good many Americans believe that when our nation fails to acknowledge God — when we fall away from God as a people — we invite disaster."



John Hafner received his master's in journalism from UM in May. He was the photo editor for Bugle Magazine, a publication of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and is a student member of the Outdoor Writer's Association of America. He plans to pursue a career in outdoor communication.

"Of all those arts in which the wise excel, Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well."

— Duke of Buckinghamshire
John Sheffield (1649-1720)



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PASSPORT, LAPTOP, TICKET — GO!

In the rush to cover the war on terrorism, The Denver Post sent Gwen Florio as a foreign correspondent to Pakistan and Afghanistan — although she was fulfilling a life-long dream, there were many barriers to overcome in a hurry.

BY GWEN FLORIO

When most newspapers appoint a foreign correspondent, they give that person up to a year to prepare — sending the reporter to language lessons and university classes on the part of the world he or she will be covering.

I got a long weekend.

“Do you have your passport with you?” Evan Dreyer, my city editor, asked.

“Um,” I replied.

I was in New York, as part of a cadre of five reporters and photographers dispatched by the Denver Post, as soon as the airports reopened after Sept. 11. It was supposed to be a five-day trip, but the enormity of the story grew by the day. As a result, we extended our stay, and I was now in my second week.

For days I had argued — hopelessly, I thought, given that the Post has only a single foreign-affairs reporter — that we should be making a similar effort overseas.

Now my words were coming back to haunt me.

As Evan rattled on about how the paper would Fed-Ex my passport to me so that I could take a next-day flight for Pakistan, I tried to figure out the best way to break the bad news.

“Um,” I said again, certain that my dream of being a foreign correspondent — a dream I’ve held dear for the entire 25 years of my career — was about to vanish.



Courtesy of The Denver Post

Gwen Florio, second from left, relaxes with Afghan women in traditional dress.

“My passport expired a month ago.”

Evan didn’t miss a beat. He told me to go to a 24-hour passport place and pay whatever to get a new one. “And don’t forget your shots,” he said, entirely too cheerfully.

I got a break. Because it was a Friday, the new passport wouldn’t come through until Tuesday. That gave me the whole weekend to Web-surf like a maniac and download centuries of Central Asian history and politics into my increasingly addled brain.

On Tuesday, I boarded an Air Pakistan flight with my crisp, hours-old passport in hand and watched the smoldering ruins of what had been the World Trade Center recede into the distance. Except for Post photographer Karl Gehring, who had managed to get onto the flight at the last minute, I was the only Westerner among hundreds of people.

All around me were men — men in prayer caps, men in the baggy tunic-and-pants garb known as shalwar kamiz, men with long beards henna-tinted a violent orange. There were also a very few, heavily veiled, women. As the plane lumbered toward our London layover, the men around me bowed and murmured in prayer.

I sat stiffly, my head full of the images I’d acquired during my last-minute cramming — visions of crazed mobs made up of people who looked exactly like everyone around me screaming “Death to Americans!”

I was scared witless.

My worst fears surpassed physical danger. I wasn’t exactly sure how to do my new assignment. Foreign reporting is 80 percent logistics and 20 percent reporting on the good days.



Florio's travels took her to Afghanistan and Pakistan

You need a translator — preferably one who speaks several languages. In Pakistan, the main language is Urdu, but the ethnic Pashtuns living near the Afghanistan border speak Pashto. So do many of Pakistan's approximately 2 million Afghan refugees. But the Afghan refugees from the interior speak Dari, a form of Persian. So we're up to — what? — four languages, now, counting English. Try to find somebody in the United States who does that. But in Pakistan, it seemed that nearly everyone we met had a half-dozen languages at their command.

Then, you need a driver. The Post's travel agent, as befuddled by the assignment as I was, arranged for a rental car that she envisioned I'd drive away from the Islamabad airport. As if! Pakistanis drive on the "wrong" side, a legacy of British colonialism. They drive very, very fast, with much beeping and swerving. They share the road with huge, colorful trucks, donkeys, buses, pedicabs, swarms of pedestrians and the occasional camel. On my own, I'd have lasted about a minute. Luckily, Bruce Finley, our foreign affairs reporter, had already spent more than a week in Pakistan with photographer Cyrus McCrimmon and was ready to leave by the time we arrived. Karl and I inherited their driver.

That left us with the problem of how to get our stories and pictures back to the Post. Islamabad is a some-

what cosmopolitan city, but the electricity went out occasionally, and Internet connections were brutally slow. That's where the satellite phone came in. But to run the sat phone, you need a source of power. In Pakistan, we were lucky: The electricity was reliable enough that we charged our laptops, the satellite phone and cameras straight from the wall outlets.

Afghanistan would be a different story.

Somehow, incredibly, given

what novices we were, we began to master Pakistan. I'm not sure I remember the moment things "clicked" — when, after reporting and filing one story, I thought, "Well the obvious story to do next is this. And then, after that, we should check into such-and-such."

Similar to a regular stateside beat, people we interviewed and photographed spoke of other things happening around the country, and we would explore those angles. We'd

My worst fears surpassed physical danger. I wasn't exactly sure how to do my new assignment. Foreign reporting is 80 percent logistics and 20 percent reporting on the good days.

been in the country only a few days when we encountered the mobs I'd feared. Members shook their fists in our faces, spit on us and shoved us. Little kids threw stones at us and surrounded our car, rocking it. Men groped me, and picked Karl's pocket

stealing \$1,000 worth of camera disks. The night the United States started bombing Afghanistan a hotel clerk came and knocked on my door. "Please stay in your room," he begged. He told me that when news of the bombing had swept the

hotel, some of the guests had noticed a foreign reporter and chased him across the lobby.

But there were days and moments — when an old man gave me salt to counteract the effects of tear-gas at a demonstration, when young women smilingly showed me the proper way to fold and drape my duppata (headscarf) and painted my hands with intricate henna designs, when our driver invited us to dinner with his fami-



Gwen Florio, right, poses with a new friend while in Afghanistan.

Courtesy of The Denver Post

Passport, Laptop, Ticket — Go!

ly in the tiny home they shared with their chickens, and especially when we went to his niece's wedding — that were so wonderfully exotic and engaging that they transcended the difficulties and we got cocky.

As soon as we got back to Denver I went to my editors with a new proposal: "We need to be in Afghanistan."



Courtesy of The Denver Post

News photographer focuses on a subject. Getting up close and personal in wartime means putting oneself in harm's way.

The initial military victory in Afghanistan came so quickly that it's hard to remember what it was like when the air war first started. Despite daily bombing raids, the Taliban still held all of Afghanistan from Mazar-I-Sharif and Kabul south; the Northern Alliance was stuck in the same territory it had commanded for years.

The only way into Afghanistan was through Tajikistan, and then south by jeep down through Northern Alliance-held regions, then by truck or horseback through the mountain passes in the Hindu Kush. Reporters who took this grueling route were able to get to the front lines, within an hour or so of Kabul. Heck, they'd done it, I reasoned. So could we.

After just a two-week respite in Denver, Karl and I were camped out in shabby rooms in Tajikistan's best hotel, part of a convoy set to leave at 6 a.m. for the day-long drive to the Afghan border.

A French reporter passed me in a hallway so dark that I had to use my flashlight. He caught my arm and asked if I'd heard about the journalists.

I shook my head no.

He told me three reporters had been killed that day in Afghanistan while riding in a convoy with Northern Alliance troops on the very road that we were to take in the next few days. The French journalist wasn't sure of the details. At least one of the three had been shot, he said. "The others" — he drew his finger across his throat.

I went back to my room and sat for a long time on my hard, narrow bed. I was shaking all over. I tried to imagine how my kids, both college-age, both of whom had begged me not to make this trip, would feel if their mom got her throat cut. The satellite phone, the phone I wanted to use to call Evan and tell

him that actually, Afghanistan wasn't such a good idea after all, was in Karl's room. It was late. Karl was probably asleep.

In the end, an insane fear of humiliation — I was the only woman among the Post's ever-increasing foreign contingent, and would be damned if I wussed out — defeated the quite legitimate fear of death.

The next day, we left for Afghanistan.

Maybe the fact that we made it alive put everything in perspective. The trip to Kabul, from which the Taliban fled just a couple of days before we arrived, while exhausting and frequently frightening, wasn't completely awful. OK, so there was no running water, no electricity anywhere along the route. The lack of water was an inconvenience: cold bucket baths, while leaving much to be desired, were better than

no baths at all. But we needed electricity to file, and — despite the fact that Karl and I each carried \$6,000 in cash stashed in pockets, socks and money belts — we'd been too afraid of running out of money to spring for an \$800 generator. We sucked up to reporters from bigger papers with fatter wallets, offering candy bars in exchange for hits from their generators. But, in a things-could-be-worse mantra that I recited daily, the snobs held off long enough so that we didn't have to ride horses over the pass, and we never had to sleep in the tent that I'd lugged along.

The teenagers with AK-47s who threatened to arrest us when our jeep got separated from the main convoy and ended up lost in a remote mountain village finally — after an hour's intercession by a Northern Alliance soldier who'd bummed a ride with us — let us go. I learned that one could indeed survive for days by just eating energy bars, that "Handi-wipes," used liberally, are a fine substitute for a shower, and that modesty — on a trip with hardly any other women, through barren, rocky country with no bathrooms, and no trees or bushes, either — is highly overrated.

Once in Kabul, we rented rooms in a private home that was positive-

We slept on the floor in our house, and the toilet was the squat-style Turkish variety, we had (cold) running water, electricity almost every evening, and use of a generator when that failed. And, the women in the house — who ducked out of sight whenever Karl appeared — were fabulous cooks.

ly luxurious compared to the booked-solid Intercontinental Hotel, where news conferences were held by candlelight when the electricity failed, and where reporters toted buckets of water up and down the stairs.

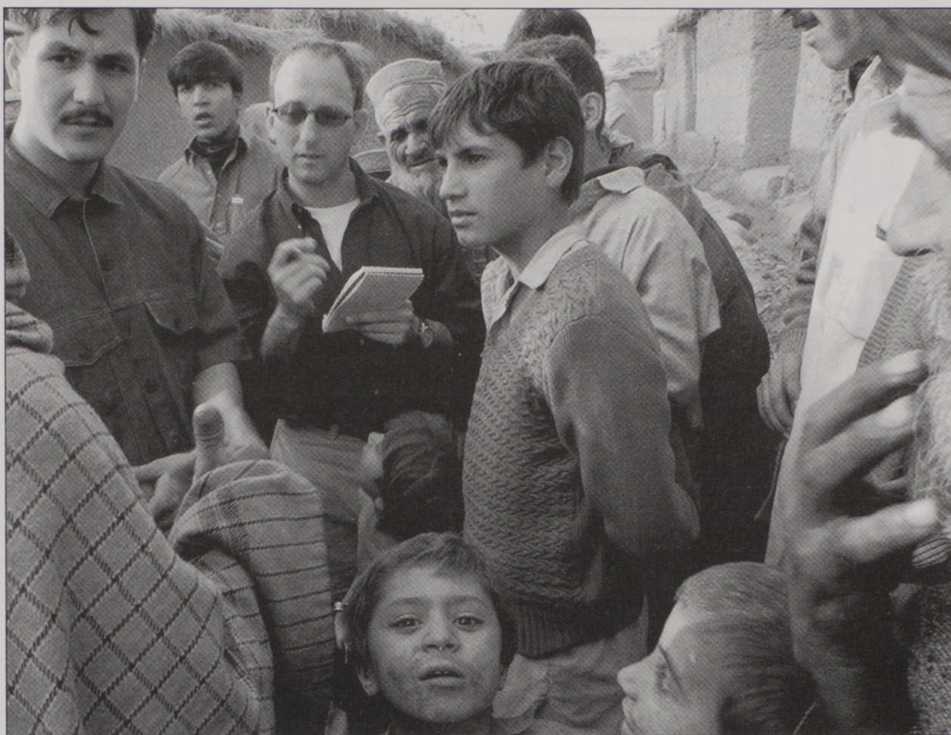
We slept on the floor in our house, and the toilet was the squat-style Turkish variety. We had (cold) running water, electricity almost every evening, and use of a generator

when that failed. And, the women in the house — who ducked out of sight whenever Karl appeared — were fabulous cooks.

Clean (relatively; bucket baths were still the order of the day), with a good night's sleep and full bellies, we ventured out into a tragic ruin of a city where to walk two steps in any direction was to trip over a heart-rending story. We found stories everywhere: families crowded into pitiful city apartments who traveled to Kabul's outskirts to gather firewood in vineyards that turned out to be the estates where they'd formerly lived. Rows of maimed, blinded children in hospital beds, victims of a countryside salted with land mines during two decades of war.

Young women, their burqas defiantly pulled back from their faces, striding into Kabul University to register for the classes they'd been forbidden from attending during Taliban rule. Young men hammering coffee cans flat and riveting them together to form satellite dishes to sell to a population famished for television. A blind, moth-eaten lion who was the main attraction at the wreck that was the Kabul Zoo, and whose survival through waves of fighting by the Russians and the Taliban had made him the pride of the city.

The stories stacked up; every one we did seemed to lead to three more. We could have stayed for months. Except we really couldn't. It cost us nearly \$500 a day to function in Afghanistan, and we had already spent a total of about \$5,000 just to get from the northern border down to Kabul. Our money melted away. Christmas was approaching. Our families, when we called them on the satellite phone at \$7 a minute, sounded increasingly frantic. Another four reporters had been killed, one of them in a town where we'd stayed the previous week.



Courtesy of The Denver Post

Denver Post reporter Steve Lipsher, pictured here with notebook, interviews villagers with the aid of an interpreter.

It was time to go.

You don't realized how quickly you've acclimated to a place until you leave. Karl and I paid \$2,500 apiece for seats on a cramped United Nations flight to Islamabad — the only safe way out of the country. As the plane circled Pakistan's capital, a city we'd once found depressing for its dirt and poverty, we elbowed one another in wonder.

Paved roads! Power lines! And look at all those cars!

In the airport, we gaped at the Pakistani women, whose bared faces and forearms looked almost indecent after weeks spent among ghostly, burqa-clad forms. At the hotel, we rushed into our respective bathrooms and twisted the taps. Water gushed hot and plentiful — a miracle.

Today, people ask me if I miss the excitement of foreign reporting.

Gosh, no, I say. Indoor plumbing is all the excitement I need.

Truth is, I miss it terribly.

It was an enormous privilege to be sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan — and, as part of a Post project on the continuing war on terrorism, to Somalia and Sudan in January. By the time I got back from my most recent trip, my four-month-old passport was wrinkled and worn, its pages completely filled with stamps and visas. And it was an awesome responsibility to try to educate Post readers, even as we educated ourselves, about the dauntingly complex issues of those regions.

If there has been any good in the aftermath of Sept. 11, it's been the fact that we've realized the risks in ignoring what's happening in the rest of our world. We all benefit when news organizations realize that foreign reporting is no longer a luxury. It's a necessity.



Gwen Florio is the national reporter for The Denver Post. After Sept. 11, she reported from New York City, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Prior to joining the Post, she worked at the Philadelphia Inquirer for 15 years, three of which were spent as that newspaper's Western correspondent, when her territory included Montana.

Vanessa Leggett:

Defying court subpoenas in the name of the First Amendment

Keeping tight-lipped about confidential sources landed Vanessa Leggett six months in jail

BY SUE ELLISON

Vanessa Leggett had hoped to have a contract for her true-crime book by the end of 2001. She had spent four years researching the high-profile 1997 murder-for-hire of the wife of Houston millionaire bookie Robert Angleton. Instead, the petite aspiring freelance true-crime writer celebrated the New Year in an 8x10-foot federal detention center cinderblock cell, in defiance of a federal grand jury subpoena for all of her investigative research.

Released in early January, Leggett holds the dubious distinction for the longest incarceration — 168 days — of any writer or reporter jailed in the United States while claiming the journalist's privilege of media confidentiality.

Although a Texas state jury acquitted Robert Angleton of the murder in 1998, a federal grand jury investigating his activities wanted all the information Leggett had gained about his wife's murder. When she was arrested in July, Leggett said from jail: "I am not a martyr and I want to see justice done. But I am doing what I must to protect the public's interest in a free press." Although she was free, her ordeal had not ended.

A succeeding grand jury indicted Angleton for murder conspiracy, and the government claimed Leggett as a witness. Vowing to maintain her "journalist integrity," Leggett said she'd face further jail time rather



Courtesy of The Houston Chronicle

Vanessa Leggett during an August 8, 2001 interview in the federal detention facility in downtown Houston. She would be in prison for another five months.

than divulge confidential sources.

Unsuccessful in three lower federal court appeals to overturn her contempt citation, she learned in mid-April that the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear her appeal.

Leggett's defiance has drawn unprecedented support from journalists around the world, who vociferously protested Leggett's jailing as a blatant disregard for the First Amendment and international conventions for freedom of the press. They have appealed to the U.S. Department of Justice, filed friend-of-the-court briefs and announced their displeasure in countless media and Internet Web sites.

How is it that the American government, whose successful function relies in part on freedom of the press, not only allowed but participated in

this threat to a fundamental constitutional privilege? The threat lies in the Justice Department's formidable discretion in determining which writers are journalists entitled to First Amendment protections.

Leggett, 34, says she has always been fascinated with murder cases and was once a licensed private investigator. Later, she taught police courses at the University of Houston-Downtown and wrote a chapter for an FBI Academy training manual.

In 1997, Leggett's interest was diverted to the Angleton murder. Doris Angleton, 46, was shot to death shortly after she initiated divorce proceedings. According to Leggett, Doris threatened to expose her husband's questionably gained fortune. The state charged Robert, 48, with hiring his brother, Roger Angleton, to kill Doris.

In the ensuing four years, Leggett conducted interviews in six states and taped more than 40 hours of conversations with Roger in the Harris County, Texas, jail. Roger committed suicide in his cell in February 1998 and left a note exonerating Robert. Despite the note, Robert was still tried for the murder.

Leggett risked arrest by ignoring a subpoena to appear before the state grand jury investigating the crime. But, after being advised that Roger's death erased her confidentiality agreement with him, she negotiated a deal to loan tapes to the prosecution she said clearly implicated Robert. Prosecutors did not introduce the tapes as evidence, and Robert was acquitted. The Los Angeles Times quoted prosecuting attorney Lyn McClellan as saying, "There was nothing in them that was earth shattering."

Never called to testify, Leggett admitted to being "stunned" at Robert's acquittal.

The Harris County district attorney referred the case to the FBI. If that agency's ensuing investigation of Robert — supposedly for tax evasion and money laundering — could prove Angleton crossed state lines to hire his brother, the federal government could claim jurisdiction and retry him for the murder.

The FBI offered Leggett a confidential informant contract in November 2000 to buy her research and control its publication. She refused on the basis of media confidentiality. The federal grand jury investigating the case served her a subpoena. Leggett testified before the grand jury in December, on the FBI's promise she would not be asked to reveal confidential sources.

The grand jury issued another subpoena on June 18, 2001, ordering Leggett to provide "Any and all taped recorded conversations, originals and copies, of conversations (she) had with (34 people listed) or any other recorded conversations with individuals associated with the prosecution of Robert Angleton, either with or without their consent ..."

The Southern District Court denied Leggett's appeal to quash the subpoena in a closed hearing on July

Free Vanessa Leggett!

CENTER FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM
www.cif.org

Courtesy of www.cif.org

While Leggett was in jail, the Center for Individual Freedom supported her defense by selling bumper stickers through its Web site.

6, ruling that no qualified reporter's privilege exists in criminal cases. The contempt order and court decision were sealed.

In an identical subpoena issued July 18, Judge Melinda Harmon ordered Leggett to appear before the grand jury the following day. After hiring Houston attorney Mike DeGuerin, she appeared as ordered but refused to testify, claiming First and Fifth Amendment protections.

Clark offered Leggett what DeGuerin later called "a limited offer of partial immunity." When she declined, Judge Harmon — without applying any First Amendment considerations for media confidentiality — held Leggett in contempt as a recalcitrant witness.

Leggett was arrested the next day and jailed without bail in the Houston Federal Detention Center. DeGuerin immediately filed an appeal to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing the lower court abused its discretion when it failed to address reporter's privilege and approved an overly broad subpoena.

Four prominent journalism organizations, The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the Society of Professional Journalists, The American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Radio-Television News Directors Association, joined in an amicus brief on Leggett's behalf. The brief argued that unrestrained subpoenas in disregard of journalists' constitutional qualified privilege amount to press harassment and the use of journalists as private investigators for the government.

Petitioning the court for permission to join the brief were more than 20 news media and writer's groups, including major television networks, The New York Times, The

Washington Post and The Associated Press. The Reporters Committee, having secured DeGuerin's agreement, asked the court's permission to participate in oral arguments. The court denied both petitions and ordered the Aug. 15 hearing closed.

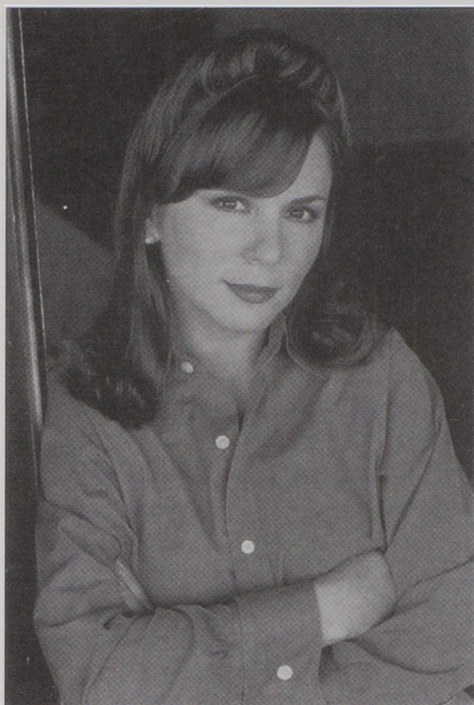
The court also denied an emergency motion filed by news media asking the 5th Circuit to reconsider closure on the basis that constitutional interests demanded a public hearing. But the court rescinded that decision the day of the hearing, after U.S. Rep Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, a member of the Committee on the Judiciary, publicly censured U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Reuters quoted the congresswoman on Aug. 14: "I believe the Justice Department has not followed its own internal guidelines (which) require an attorney general's review." Since 1973's Watergate scandal, the U.S. attorney general must give permission for a journalist's subpoena. Justice's guidelines require the exhaustion of all alternative sources for subpoenas, which must never be used to gain "peripheral, nonessential or speculative information."

The SPJ felt so strongly Leggett's incarceration was an injustice that, in August, its national board voted to contribute half of her legal fees, which DeGuerin capped at \$25,000, from its Legal Defense Fund.

A three-judge panel heard Leggett's appeal and, on Aug. 17, released its unsigned opinion affirming the district court's judgment. While the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals recognized Leggett as an "aspiring freelance writer," it did not address the qualified reporter's privilege test established in 1972 in *Branzburg v. Hayes*.

In that case, the dissent of four



Courtesy of Vanessa Leggett

After her release, Leggett said, "... I am doing what I must to protect the public's interest in a free press."

Supreme Court justices combined with the enigmatic opinion of concurring Justice Lewis Powell to establish a balancing test for consideration of qualified privilege in criminal cases. The three-part test asks if reasonable grounds exist that the reporter has information relevant to the grand jury's investigation; if the government can show a compelling need for the information; and if the information is unavailable from other sources.

Neither did the court address Leggett's journalist status as defined in *re Madden* (3rd in Circuit, 1998). The case recognized a journalist as one engaged in investigative reporting to gather news for public dissemination.

While Leggett's appeal argued that both precedents applied, the court defined reporter's privilege as "ineffectual against a grand jury subpoena absent of governmental harassment or oppression." That is exactly what the government was doing — harassing Leggett — argued DeGuerin. The subpoena was overly broad and a government "fishing expedition."

Some of those sources listed in the subpoena, according to Leggett,

include FBI agents and Houston detectives involved in the Angleton case.

However, the court ruled that the subpoena was "not so overly broad as to be oppressive."

Lucy Dalglish, Reporters Committee executive director, publicly noted that prosecutors might be less aggressive if dealing with a major news publication journalist. (CBS was also investigating the Angleton murder case and aired its 48 Hours program shortly after Leggett's release.)

In an Aug. 16 PBS NewsHour interview, Dalglish commented that the secret nature of the contempt order and closed court hearings could have buried Leggett's case in obscurity. "Had (Leggett) not sought help from journalism organizations prior to being sentenced for contempt," Dalglish said, "she would have been secretly jailed as well."

The Reporters Committee has kept track of reporters and writers jailed for contempt in America since 1984. Of 17 jailed, only one was a freelance book writer. Chris Van Ness spent several hours in jail before giving up a taped interview with a suspect in the 1984 drug overdose death of John Belushi. Until Leggett's incarceration, the longest-jailed journalist was Los Angeles

Herald Examiner reporter William Farr, who spent 46 days behind bars in 1972 for protecting the source of leaked documents pertaining to the Charles Manson trial. The last time the Justice

Department effected the jailing of a journalist was in 1991, when four South Carolina reporters spent eight hours in jail for refusing to testify about unpublished conversations with a state senator on trial for corruption.

SPJ honored Leggett's self-conviction at its October 2001 National Convention in Seattle. SPJ hoped to present a videotaped interview with her at its award ceremony. But the detention center warden denied the interview, saying that SPJ — publisher of the magazine *Quill* — is not

considered a news media representative.

Officials of the U.S. Justice Department, in response to questions and criticism about the department's handling of the case, say that its guidelines were fully considered and no legal reason existed to negate Leggett's incarceration.

USA Today opined that Ashcroft's disengagement in the case "is reversing a policy that gives journalists wide latitude in protecting confidential sources ..."

On Sept. 10, Leggett appealed again to the 5th Circuit, asking for bond and a hearing before the entire 14-judge court. Lacking a response, her attorney asked for bond again in early November. DeGuerin said in a subsequent interview, "The press should be the watchdog of the police, not their lapdog."

When, on Nov. 13, the court rejected the appeal, DeGuerin announced Leggett's appeal to the Supreme Court.

In an interview with SPJ Legal Defense Fund chair Christine Tatum, DeGuerin raised a question disquieting to journalists' responsibility to the public. While Leggett denied the government access to her investigative research, DeGuerin said, "I wonder how many other journalists didn't tell them no."

By refusing to hear Leggett's appeal, the Supreme Court's decision could have disastrous ramifications. But it also would have been detrimental if it had heard the

case and re-affirmed the lower court decisions.

Under threat of compelled disclosure, journalists may lose the incentive to gather news for later dissemination, to the detriment of the public and historical record. A journalist subject to a government's subpoena of work products loses objective reporting ability and becomes an ex officio arm of the government, negating public government officials' accountability. Investigative reporters could lose the trust of sources and frighten

"The press should be the watchdog of the police, not their lapdog."

**-Mike DeGuerin
Leggett's Houston attorney**

away potential ones. Fighting subpoenas is costly to both the journalist and the government.

More frightening is the prospect that state and federal judges can decide whether a journalist's work product qualifies for First Amendment protections and can arbitrarily pass judgment, bypassing constitutional balancing tests.

Esponsing international human rights, the United States is attacking its own credibility. The free flow of information — endorsed by the U.S. Constitution and demanded globally by the American government — is in jeopardy, especially in countries where it is newly emerging from historical repression.

Notable is the fact that the only person sentenced to jail time in the murder case was in no way involved in the crime. Greta Van Susteren, in an Aug. 17 CNN Flashpoint interview, reflected the cynicism of some who felt Leggett held out only to advance the value of her book.

"This is not a writer's publicity stunt," Leggett answered. "I did not choose to put myself here. The only beneficiary is not me or an agent or a publisher ... it's the American people."

Leggett answered the hundreds of letters she received in jail, mindful that her jailors read each inbound and outbound letter. She wrote supporters their letters were lights "at the end of the tunnel" of her struggle to hold fast to the government's promise of a free press.

She may yet need their support, as she has said she will return to jail rather than break her promises of media confidentiality. Under scrutiny by journalist and federal prosecutors alike, Leggett is still surprisingly calm, still articulate and still focused on her book. (She landed an estimated \$600,000 contract with Crown Publishing, a division of Random House, in May.) But she worries the merits of the book will be buried under the sensationalism of her own highly publicized experience.

The 1735 John Peter Zenger case established that no government agency has jurisdiction over the truth, and truth is what American democracy, through a free press, purports to uphold.

The Supreme Court's decision (without explanation) to deny Leggett's media confidentiality appeal leaves open the question of the means by which journalists can match Zenger's principles. Leggett's stance may be a lost cause for this generation of journalists.

Or, it may be a standard for future generations to demand truths untainted by federal intervention.



Sue Ellison is a 2001 graduate of the UM School of Journalism. She was an associate editor and advertising manager for the 2001 Journalism Review.

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The Independent Record newsroom is almost a J School alumni association.

Seven members of our news team—Carolynn McLuskey, Christina Quinn, Chris West, Thomas Mendyke, Tom Cotton, Sheila Habeck and Jon Ebel — are University of Montana journalism graduates.

Our readers benefit from the standard set and the skills taught by the J School. And the natural curiosity that brings journalists to this work.



INDEPENDENT RECORD

Newsroom *poetry*

*Finding inspiration from the daily miracle
of putting out a newspaper, journalist and poet David Tucker
finds creative characters to write about in and out of the newsroom*

BY DAVID TUCKER

I write poems about newsrooms for the most basic reason: I spend half my life there. Way too much of it, but that is another story.

Actually I write poems about a lot of things: love, family, dreams, weather, death, my cats and the slow news of ordinary life.

But newsrooms offer irresistible material. How the paper gets out each day still amazes me. You have this massive beast of an operation — reporters and editors, technicians and truck drivers, researchers and salesmen all working against a relentless stream of deadlines to tell the story of a single day.

There are few other places where you can work in the language with such intensity. Colleges are festooned with writing workshops, but the newsroom is workshop for real, and its rush to deadline can become a creative process as maddening as trying to sew a parachute before hitting the ground. Despite what some of my colleagues say, I find no shortage of characters to write about in the modern newsroom: profane, bullying city editors (we have those), volatile reporters (to drive the editors crazy) and photographers (who resemble guerrilla warriors).

But it's not just the high drama of the newsroom that makes me write poems about it. Mostly, I think, it's the words I keep hearing there every day.

Consider this story. On a cold night last February, fire swept through a rundown apartment building on Newark's south side, killing two sisters, one six the other 11, who had been left alone in their third-floor apartment. The father was charged with neglect for leaving the children unwatched but that was only part of what proved to be a complicated tragedy. It soon became clear that the building itself was a civic outrage — dirty, foul-smelling, rat-infested and often without heat.

Residents reported the building

had been cold most of the winter, forcing them to use space heaters, which many felt may have caused the fire. Preliminary records work by Star-Ledger reporters also disclosed that the owner of the building had been cited numerous times for failure to supply heat, yet the city had never brought him to court; repeated code citations were ignored and the abuses piled up.

Reporting the story soon became difficult. The city government, presided over by a mayor running for his fifth term, refused to supply records which would allow reporters to document the true extent of the city's lack of oversight of this building and of others owned by Newark slum-

Today's News

A slow news day, but I did like the obit about the butcher who kept the same store for 50 years. People remembered when his street was sweetly roaring, aproned with flower stalls and fish stands. The stock market wandered, spooked by presidential winks, by micro-winds and the shadows of earnings. News was stationed around the horizon, ready as summer clouds to thunder-- but it moved off and we covered the committee meeting at the back of the state house, sat around on our desks then went home early. The birds were still singing, the sun just going down. Working these long hours you forget how beautiful the early evening can be, the big houses like ships turning into the night, their rooms piled high with silence

—by David Tucker

lords. The paper's lawyers are threatening to take the city to court but such battles can take months to resolve.

Reporting was also slowed by a lack of detailed eyewitness accounts; residents of the building have now scattered into other slum dwellings in the city and are hard to find.

Then one night in mid-April, we got a small break. Through exhaustive street work, reporter Russell Ben-Ali located a man who had lived on the second floor underneath the apartment where the children died. He told us about life in the building and its many problems. Then he told us something totally unexpected.

I happened to be standing near Russell's terminal during the telephone interview when he typed these words: "I could hear the little girls running back and forth above. They were screaming. I thought they were getting a beating. That's before we knew there was a fire. My wife and I, we still have nightmares. Those little feet, I still hear them."

Words, an image, to make everything else stop.

When I sit down each morning to write poetry before I go to work, I am not deliberately searching for a newsroom theme or any theme.

I am just looking for a way into a poem. I start out by taking a deep breath and writing notes about the weather, about dreams, about nonsense — trying to overhear my own jumbled thoughts. I play with sounds and images and most of the time don't know where I am going. More gets written and tossed aside than gets saved; poems 10 years old are still not finished and may never be. Most of what goes onto the screen is junk—dead-end anecdotes, clichés and passive sentimental crap.

But sometimes something different gets through, some combination of sound and image that makes for an original line and you always know it when you see it. There is a sudden clarity in the image and the words

make music. Just one good line can get you started. And I would gladly settle for one good line a day.

Reporting is like that. Reporters bang their heads against walls for days, weeks. They wade through junk information and deceit and go up against officials who won't give up public records. They search the streets for poor tenants who have been lost in the city's chaos on the slight chance that one of them might know something about what happened the night of a fire.

Then late one night a lost tenant is found and the reporter, sitting in a nearly empty city room takes the man's words down over the telephone typing with increasing amazement. The words bring a horrible new fact to a story that needs to be told. Someone heard the little girls dying.

"Those little feet," the man said. "I still remember them."

Words like that, spare, haunting and musical. You don't hear words like that just anywhere. But I know two places where you do.

The Old Reporter

The young reporters are taking bets
on when she'll collapse and whether
it will happen in the newsroom
or in the bar next door. Her wheezy cough
has already wounded the roses
the staff gave her for her birthday last week.
She has the deadline shakes, she forgets
the things you tell her, she lives
on smoke and vodka,
and picks fights with the rookies.

The managing editor is offering her
early retirement, a decent buyout,
a party, a plaque. It's that, or life
on the obit desk. She can't hold out
much longer, our good ol' girl,
who was quick and brassy
and saw through shit
in the wild, early days of LBJ.

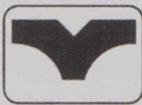
—by David Tucker



David Tucker has worked at the Toronto Star and the Philadelphia Inquirer, where he served as sports editor and city editor. He is currently assistant managing editor at the New Jersey Star-Ledger. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in several magazines and anthologies including Boulevard, The Literary Review Greensboro Review, New York Quarterly and Fine Madness. He was a runner up for the 2001 Grolier Poetry Prize. Tucker is a graduate of the University of Michigan. He also attended the School of Journalism at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto.

"It is a newspaper's duty
to print the news and raise
hell."

Chicago Tribune - 1861



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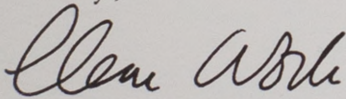
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clem Work".

Clem Work, Editor,
and the staff of the Montana Journalism Review

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